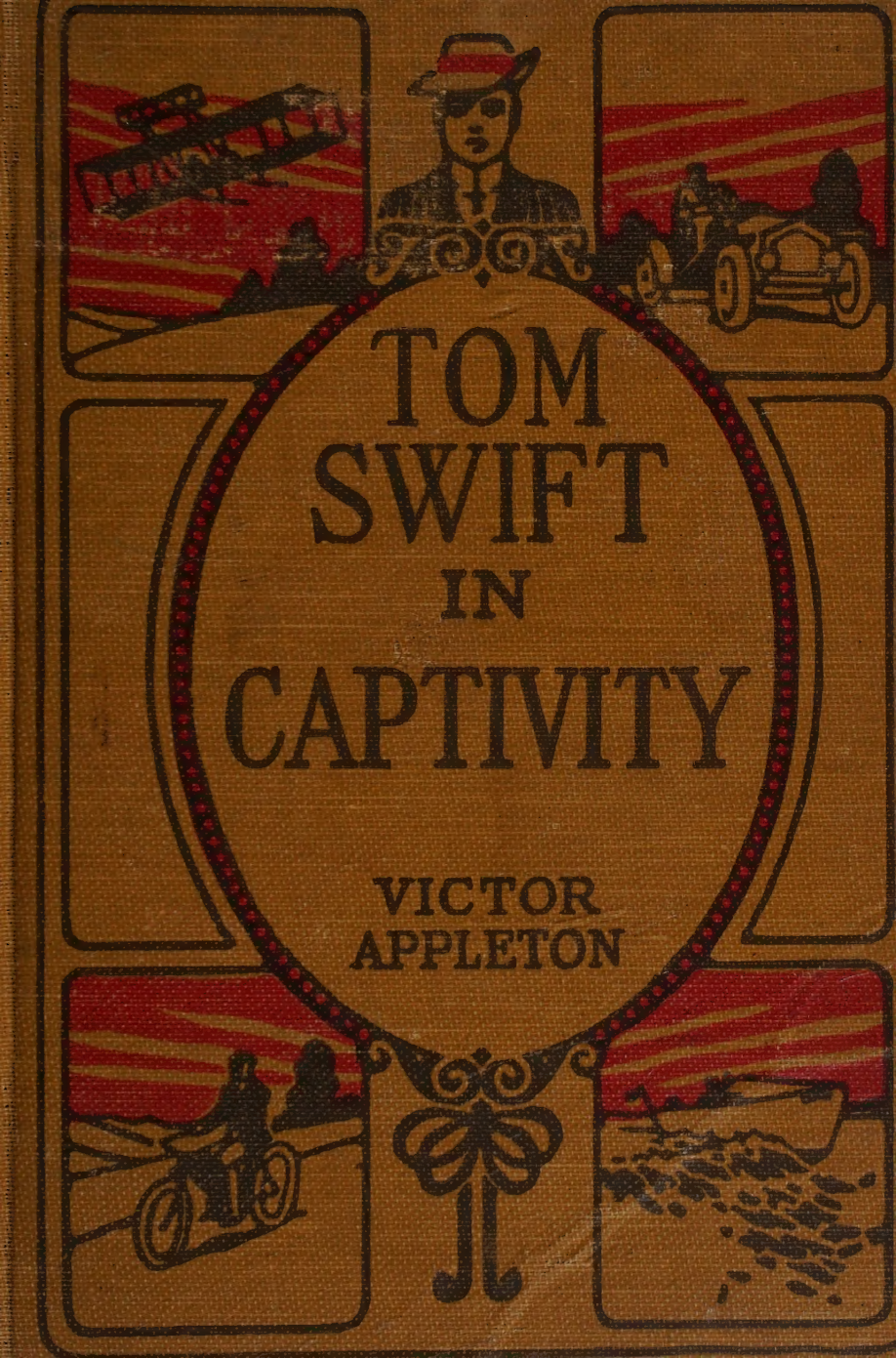
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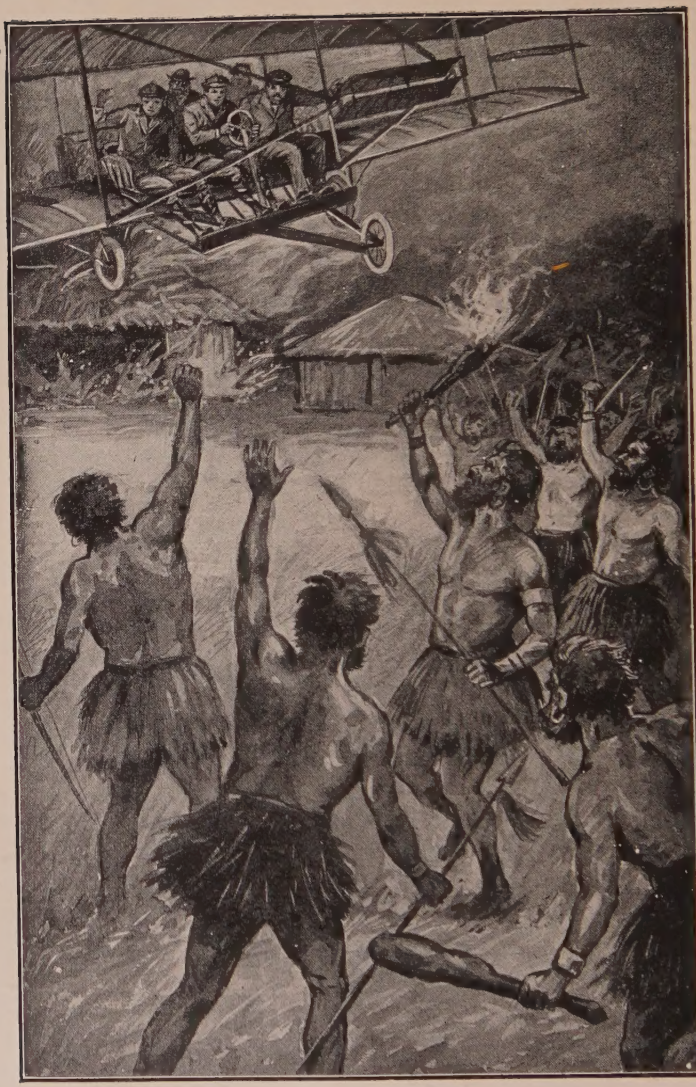

THERE WAS A RATTLING, BANGING NOISE, AND THE BIG PROPELLERS REVOLVED WITH INCREDIBLE SWIFTNESS. — *Page* 209.
Tom Swift in Captivity.

TOM SWIFT IN CAPTIVITY

OR

A Daring Escape by Airship

BY

VICTOR APPLETON

AUTHOR OF "TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR-CYCLE," "TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIRELESS MESSAGE," "TOM SWIFT IN THE CITY OF GOLD," ETC.

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THE TOM SWIFT SERIES

TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR-CYCLE
Or Fun and Adventures on the Road

TOM SWIFT AND HIS MOTOR-BOAT
Or The Rivals of Lake Carlopa

TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIRSHIP
Or the Stirring Cruise of the Red Cloud

TOM SWIFT AND HIS SUBMARINE BOAT
Or Under the Ocean for Sunken Treasure

TOM SWIFT AND HIS ELECTRIC RUNABOUT
Or the Speediest Car on the Road

TOM SWIFT AND HIS WIRELESS MESSAGE
Or the Castaways of Earthquake Island

TOM SWIFT AMONG THE DIAMOND MAKERS
Or the Secret of Phantom Mountain

TOM SWIFT IN THE CAVES OF ICE
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TOM SWIFT AND HIS SKY RACER
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TOM SWIFT IN THE CITY OF GOLD
Or Marvelous Adventures Underground

TOM SWIFT AND HIS AIR GLIDER
Or Seeking the Platinum Treasure

TOM SWIFT IN CAPTIVITY
Or A Daring Escape by Airship

(Other Volumes in Preparation)

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Tom Swift in Captivity

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A Strange Request	1
II	The Circus Man	11
III	Tom Will Go	20
IV	"Look Out for My Rival!"	28
V	Andy Foger Learns Something	37
VI	Alarming News	48
VII	Fire on Board	57
VIII	A Narrow Escape	68
IX	"Forward March!"	76
X	A Wild Horse Stampede	85
XI	Caught in a Living Rope	94
XII	A Native Battle	105
XIII	The Desertion	113
XIV	In Giant Land	123
XV	In the "Palace" of the King	132
XVI	The Rival Circus Man	142
XVII	Held Captives	150
XVIII	Tom's Mysterious Box	158
XIX	Weak Giants	165
XX	The Lone Captive	176

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXI	A Royal Conspiracy	185
XXII	The Twin Giants	192
XXIII	A Surprise in the Night	197
XXIV	The Airship Flight	202
XXV	Tom's Giant—Conclusion	210

TOM SWIFT IN CAPTIVITY

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE REQUEST

Tom Swift closed the book of adventures he had been reading, tossed it on the table, and got up. Then he yawned.

"What's the matter?" asked his chum, Ned Newton, who was deep in another volume.

"Oh, I thought this was going to be something exciting," replied Tom, motioning toward the book he had discarded. "But say! the make-believe adventures that fellow had, weren't anything compared to those we went through in the city of gold, or while rescuing the exiles of Siberia."

"Well," remarked Ned, "they would have to be pretty classy adventures to lay over those you and I have had lately. But where are you going?" he continued, for Tom had taken his cap and started for the door.

"I thought I'd go out and take a little run in the aeroplane. Want to come along? It's more fut than sitting in the house reading about exciting things that never have happened. Come on out and——"

"Yes, and have a tumble from the aeroplane, I suppose you were going to say," interrupted Ned with a laugh. "Not much! I'm going to stay here and finish this book."

"Say," demanded Tom indignantly. "Did you ever know me to have a tumble since I knew how to run an airship?"

"No, I can't say that I did. I was only joking."

"Then you carried the joke too far, as the policeman said to the man he found lugging off money from the bank. And to make up for it you've got to come along with me."

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, anywhere. Just to take a little run in the upper regions, and clear some of the cobwebs out of my head. I declare, I guess I've got the spring fever. I haven't done anything since we got back from Russia last fall, and I'm getting rusty."

"You haven't done *anything!*" exclaimed Ned, following his chum's example by tossing aside the book. "Do you call working on your new invention of a noiseless airship nothing?"

"Well, I haven't finished that yet. I'm tired of inventing things. I just want to go off, and have some good fun, like getting shipwrecked on a desert island, or being lost in the mountains, or something like that. I want action. I want to get off in the jungle, and fight wild beasts, and escape from the savages!"

"Say! you don't want much," commented Ned. "But I feel the same way, Tom."

"Then come on out and take a run, and maybe we'll get on the track of an adventure," urged the young inventor. "We won't go far, just twenty or thirty miles or so."

The two youths emerged from the house and started across the big lawn toward the aeroplane sheds, for Tom Swift owned several speedy aircrafts, from a big combined aeroplane and dirigible balloon, to a little monoplane not much larger than a big bird, but which was the most rapid flier that ever breathed the fumes of gasolene.

"Which one you going to take, Tom?" asked Ned, as his chum paused in front of the row of hangars.

"Oh, the little double-seated monoplane, I guess that's in good shape, and it's easy to manage. When I'm out for fun I hate to be tinkering with levers and warping wing tips all the while. The *Lark* practically flies herself, and we can sit back

and take it easy. I'll have Eradicate fill up the gasolene tank, while I look at the magneto. It needs a little adjusting, though it works nearly to perfection since I put in some of that new platinum we got from the lost mine in Siberia."

"Yes, that was a trip that amounted to something. I wouldn't mind going on another like that, though we ran lots of risks."

"We sure did," agreed Tom, and then, raising his voice he called out: "Rad, I say Rad! Where are you? I want you!"

"Comin', massa Tom, comin'," answered an aged colored man, as he shuffled around the corner of the shed. "What do yo'-all want ob me?"

"Put some gasoline in the Lark, Rad. Ned and I are going to take a little flight. What were you doing?"

"Jest groomin' mah mule Boomerang, Massa Tom, dat's all. Po' Boomerang he's gittin' old jest same laik I be. He's gittin' old, an' he needs lots ob 'tention. He has t' hab mo' oats dan usual, Massa Tom, an' he doan't feel 'em laik he uster, dat's a fac', Massa Tom."

"Well, Rad, give him all he wants. Boomerang was a good mule in his day."

"An' he's good yet, Massa Tom, he's good yet!" said Eradicate Sampson eagerly. "Doan't yo' all forgit dat, Massa Tom." And the colored

man proceeded to fill the gasolene tank, while Tom adjusted the electrical mechanism of his aeroplane, Ned assisting by handing him the tools needed. Eradicate, who said he was named that because he "eradicated" dirt, was a colored man of all work, who had been in the service of the Swift household for several years. He and his mule Boomerang were fixtures.

"There, I guess that will do," remarked Tom, after testing the magneto, and finding that it gave a fat, hot spark. "That ought to send us along in good shape. Got all the gas in, Rad?"

"Every drop, Massa Tom."

"Then catch hold and help wheel the *Lark* out. Ned, you steady her on that side. How are the tires? Do they need pumping up?"

"Hard as rocks," answered Tom's chum, as he tapped his toe against the rubber circlets of the small bicycle wheels on which the aeroplane rested.

"Then they'll do, I guess. Come on now, and we'll give her a test before we start off. I ought to get a few hundred more revolutions per minute out of the motor with the way I've adjusted the magneto. Rad, you and Ned hold back, while I turn the engine over."

The youth and the colored man grasped the rear supports of the long, tail-like part of the

monoplane while Tom stepped to the front to twist the propeller blades. The first two times there was no explosion as he swung the delicate wooden blades about, but the third time the engine started off with a roar, and a succession of explosions that were deafening, until Tom switched in the muffler, thereby cutting down the noise. Faster and faster the propeller whirled about as the motor warmed up, until the young inventor exclaimed:

"That's the stuff! She's better than ever! Climb up Ned, and we'll start off. You can turn her over, Rad; can't you?"

"Suah, Massa Tom," was the reply, for Eradicate had been on so many trips with Tom, and had had so much to do with airships, that to merely start one was child's play for him.

The two youths had scarcely taken their seats, and the colored man was about to twist around the fan-like blades of the big propeller in front, when from behind there came a hail.

"Hold on there! Wait a minute, Tom Swift! Bless my admission ticket, don't go! I've got something important to tell you! Hold on!"

"Humph! I know who that is!" cried Tom, motioning to Eradicate to cease trying to start the motor.

"Mr. Damon, of course," agreed Ned. "I wonder what he wants?"

"A ride, maybe," went on Tom. "If he does we've got to take the *Scooter* instead of this one. That holds four. Well, we may as well see what he wants."

He jumped lightly from his seat in the monoplane and was followed by Ned. They saw coming toward them, from the direction of the house, a stout man, who seemed very much excited. He was walking so fast that he fairly waddled, and he was smiling at the lads, for he was one of their best friends.

"Glad I caught you, Tom," he panted, for his haste had almost deprived him of breath. "I've got something important to tell you. I hurried over as soon as I heard about it."

"Well, you're just in time," commented Ned with a laugh. "In another minute we'd have been up in the clouds."

"What is it, Mr. Damon?" asked Tom. "Have you got wind of a city of diamonds, or has some one sent you a map telling where we can go to pick up ten thousand dollar bills by the basket?"

"Neither one; Tom, neither one. It's something better than either of those, and if you don't jump at the chance I'm mistaken in you, that's all I've got to say. Come over here."

He turned a quick glance over his shoulder as he spoke and advanced toward the two lads on tiptoe as though he feared some one would see or hear him. Yet it was broad daylight, the place was the starting ground for Tom's aeroplanes and save Eradicate there was no one present except Mr. Damon, Ned and the young inventor himself.

"What's up?" asked Tom in wonderment.

"Hush!" cautioned the odd gentleman. "Bless my walking stick, Tom! but this is going to be a great chance for you—for us,—for I'm going along."

"Going where, Mr. Damon?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. Is there any one here?"

"No one but us?"

"You are sure that Andy Foger isn't around?"

"Sure. He's out of town, you know."

"Yes, but you never can tell when he's going to appear on the scene. Come over here," and taking hold of the coat of each of the youths, Mr. Damon led them behind the big swinging door of the aeroplane shed.

"You haven't anything on hand; have you, Tom?" asked the odd gentleman, after peering through the crack to make sure they were unobserved.

"Nothing at all, if you mean in the line of going off on an adventure trip."

"That's what I mean. Bless my earlaps! but I'm glad of that. I've got just the thing for you. Tom, I want you to go to a strange land, and bring back one of the biggest men there—a giant! Tom Swift, you and I and Ned—if he wants to go—are going after a giant!"

Mr. Damon gleefully clapped Tom on the back, with such vigor that our hero coughed, and then the odd gentleman stepped back and gazed at the two lads, a look of triumph shining in his eyes.

For a moment there was a silence. Tom looked at Ned, and Ned gave his chum a quick glance. Then they both looked sharply at Mr. Damon.

"A—a giant," murmured Tom faintly.

"That's what I said," replied Mr. Damon. "I want you to help me capture a giant, Tom."

Once more the two youths exchanged significant glances, and then Tom, in a low and gentle voice said:

"Yes, Mr. Damon, that's all right. We'll get you a giant right away. Won't we, Ned? Now you'd better come in the house and lie down, I'll have Mrs. Baggert make you a cup of tea, and after you have had a sleep you'll feel better. Come on," and the young inventor gently tried to lead his friend out from behind the shed door.

"Look here, Tom Swift!" exclaimed the odd gentleman indignantly. "Do you think I'm crazy? Lie down? Rest myself? Go to sleep? Say, I'm not crazy! I'm not tired! I'm not sleepy! This is the greatest chance you ever had, and if we get one of those giants——"

"Yes, yes, we'll get one," put in Ned soothingly.

"Of course," added Tom. "Come on, now, Mr. Damon. You'll feel better after you've had a rest. Dr. Perkinby is coming over to see father and I'll have him——"

Mr. Damon gave one startled glance at the young inventor and his chum, and then burst into a peal of hearty laughter.

"Oh, my!" he exclaimed at intervals in his pyroxisms. "Oh, dear! He thinks I'm out of my head! He can't stand that talk about giants! Oh dear! Tom Swift, this is the greatest chance you ever had! Come on in the house and I'll tell you all I know about giant land, and then if you want to think I' crazy you can, that's all I've got to say!"

CHAPTER II

THE CIRCUS MAN

WITHOUT a word Tom and Ned followed Mr. Damon toward the Swift house. Truth to tell the youths did not know what to say, or they would have been bubbling over with questions. But the talk of the odd man, and his strange request to Tom to go off and capture a giant had so startled the young inventor and his chum that they did not know whether to think that Mr. Damon was joking, or whether he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

And while I have a few minutes that are occupied in the journey to the house I will introduce my new readers more formally to Tom Swift and his friends.

Tom though only a young man, was an inventor of note, as his father was before him. Father and son lived in a fine house in the town of Shopton, in New York state, and Mrs. Swift being dead, the two were well looked after by Mrs. Baggert their housekeeper. Eradicate Samp-

son, as I have said, was the man of all work about the place. Ned Newton who had a position in a Shopton bank, was Tom's particular chum, and Mr. Wakefield Damon, of the neighboring town of Waterfield, was a friend to all who knew him. He had the odd habit of blessing anything and everything he could think of, interspersing it in his talk.

In the first volume of this series, called "Tom Swift and His Motor-Cycle," I related how Tom made the acquaintance of Mr. Damon, afterward purchasing a damaged motor-cycle from the odd gentleman. On this machine Tom had many adventures, incidentally saving some of his father's valuable patents from a gang of conspirators. Later Tom got a motor boat, and had many races with his rivals on Lake Carlopa, beating Andy Foger, the red-haired bully of the town, in signal fashion. After his adventures on the water Tom sighed for some in the air, and he had them in his airship the *Red Cloud*.

"Tom Swift and His Submarine Boat," is a story of a search after sunken treasure, and, returning from that quest Tom built an electric runabout, the speediest car on the road. By means of a wireless message, later, Tom was able to save himself and the castaways of Earthquake Island, and, as a direct outcome of that experi-

ence, he was able to go in search of the diamond makers, and solve the secret of Phantom Mountain, as told in the book dealing with that subject.

When he went to the caves of ice Tom had bad luck, for his airship was wrecked, and he endured many hardships in getting home with his companions, particularly as Andy Foger sought revenge on him.

But Tom pluckily overcame all obstacles and, later, he built a sky racer, in which he made the quickest trip on record. After that, with his electric rifle, he went after elephants in the interior of Africa and was successful in rescuing some missionaries from the terrible red pygmies

One of the mission workers, later, sent Tom details about a buried city of gold in Mexico, and Tom and his chum together with Mr. Damon, located this mysterious place after much trouble, as told in the book entitled, "Tom Swift in the City of Gold." The gold did not prove as valuable as they expected, as it was of low grade, but they got considerable money for it, and were then ready for more adventures.

The adventures soon came, as those of you who have read the book called, "Tom Swift and His Air Glider," can testify. In that I told how Tom went to Siberia, and after rescuing some Russian political exiles, found a valuable deposit of

platinum, which to-day is a more valuable metal than gold. Tom needed some platinum for his electrical machines, and it proved very useful.

He had been back from Russia all winter and, now that Spring had come again, our hero sighed for more activity, and fresh adventures. And with the advent of Mr. Damon, and his mysterious talk about giants, Tom seemed likely to be gratified.

The two chums and the odd gentleman continued on to the house, no one speaking, until finally, when they were seated in the library, Mr. Damon said:

"Well, Tom, are you ready to listen to me now, and have me explain what I meant when I asked you to get a giant?"

"I—I suppose so," hesitated the young inventor. "But hadn't I better call dad? And are you sure you don't want to lie down and collect your thoughts? A nice hot cup of tea——"

"There, there, Tom Swift; If you tell me to lie down again, or propose any more tea I'll use you as a punching bag, bless my boxing gloves if I don't!" cried Mr. Damon and he laughed heartily. "I know what you think, Tom, and you, too, Ned," he went on, still chuckling. "You think I don't know what I'm saying, but I'll soon prove that I do. I'm fully in my senses,

I'm not crazy, I'm not talking in my sleep, and I'm very much in earnest. Tom, this is the chance of your life to get a giant, and pay a visit to giant land. Will you take it?"

"Mr. Damon, I—er—that is I——"

Tom stammered and looked at Ned.

"Now look here, Tom Swift!" exclaimed the odd man. "When you got word about the buried city of gold in Mexico you didn't hesitate a minute about making up your mind to go there; did you?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, that wasn't any more of a strain on your imagination than this giant business; was it?"

"Well, I don't know, as——"

"Bless my spectacles! Of course it wasn't! Now, look here. Tom, you just make up your mind that I know what I'm talking about, and we'll get along better. I don't blame you for being a bit puzzled at first, but just you listen. You believe there are such things as giants; don't you?"

"I saw a man in the circus once, seven feet high. They called him a giant," spoke Ned.

"A giant! He was a baby compared to the kind of giants I mean," said Mr. Damon quickly. "Tom, we are going after a race of giants, the

smallest one of which is probably eight feet high, and from that they go on up to nearly ten feet, and they're not slim fellows either, but big in proportion. Now in giant land——"

"Here's Mrs. Baggert with a quieting cup of tea," interrupted Tom. "I spoke to her as we came in, and asked her to have some ready. If you'll drink this, Mr. Damon, I'm sure——"

"Bless my sugar bowl, Tom! You make a man nervous, with your cups of tea. I'm more quiet than you, but I'll drink it to please you. Now listen to me."

"All right, go ahead."

"A friend of mine has asked me if I knew any one who could undertake to go to giant land, and get him one or two specimens of the big men there. I at once thought of you, and I said I believed you would go. And I'll go with you, Tom! Think of that! I've got faith enough in the proposition to go myself!"

There was no mistaking Mr. Damon's manner. He was very much in earnest, and Tom and Ned looked at each other with a different light in their eyes.

"Who is your friend, and where in the world is giant land?" asked Tom. "I haven't heard of such a place since I read the accounts of the early

travelers, before this continent was discovered. Who is your friend that wants a giant?"

"If you'll let me, I'll have him here in a minute, Tom."

"Of course I will. But good land! Have you got him concealed up your sleeve, or under some of the chairs? Is he a dwarf?" and Tom looked about the room as if he expected to see some one in hiding.

"I left him outside in the garden, Tom," replied the odd man. "I told him I'd come on ahead, and see how you took the proposition. Don't tell him you thought me insane at first. I'll have him here in a jiffy. I'll signal to him."

Not waiting for a word from either of the boys, Mr. Damon went to one of the low library windows, opened it, gave a shrill whistle and waved his handkerchief vigorously. In a moment there came an answering whistle.

"He's coming," announced the odd gentleman.

"But who is he?" insisted Tom. "Is he some professor who wants a giant to examine, or is he a millionaire who wants one for a body guard?"

"Neither one, Tom. He's the proprietor of a number of circuses, and a string of museums, and he wants a giant, or even two of them, for exhibition purposes. There's lots of money in giants. He's had some seven, and even eight feet

tall, but he has lately heard of a land where the tallest man is nearly ten feet high, and very big, and he'll pay ten thousand dollars for a giant alive and in good condition, as the animal men say. I believe we can get one for him, and—Ah, here he is now," and Mr. Damon interrupted himself as a small, dark-complexioned man, with a very black mustache, black eyes, a watch chain as big around as his thumb, a red vest, a large white hat, and a suit of large-sized checked clothes appeared at the open library window.

"Is it all right?" this strange-appearing man asked of Mr. Damon.

"I believe so," replied the odd gentleman. "Come in, Sam."

With one bound, though the window was some distance from the ground, the little man leaped into the library. He landed lightly on his feet, quickly turned two hand springs in rapid succession, and then, without breathing in the least rapidly, as most men would have done after that exertion, he made a low bow to Tom and Ned.

"Boys, let me introduce you to my friend, Sam Preston, an old acrobat and now a circus proprietor," said Mr. Damon. "Mr. Preston, this is Tom Swift, of whom I told you, and his chum, Ned Newton."

"And will they get the giant for me?" asked the circus man quickly.

"I think they will," replied Mr. Damon. "I had a little difficulty in making the matter clear to them, and that's why I sent for you. You can explain everything."

"Have a chair," invited Tom politely. "This is a new one on me—going after giants. I've done almost everything else, though."

"So Mr. Damon said," spoke Mr. Preston gravely. He was much more sedate and composed than one would have supposed after his sensational entrance into the room. "I am very glad to meet you, Tom Swift, and I hope we can do business together. Now, if you have a few minutes to spare, I'll tell you all I know about giant land."

CHAPTER III

TOM WILL GO

"Jove! That sounds interesting!" exclaimed Ned, as he settled himself comfortably in his chair.

"It is interesting," replied the circus man. "At least I found it so when I first listened to one of my men tell it. But whether it is possible to get to giant land, and, what is more bring away some of the big men, is something I leave to you, Tom Swift. After you have heard my story, if you decide to go, I'll stand all the expenses of fitting out an expedition, and if you fail I won't have a word to say. If, on the other hand, you bring me back a giant or two, I'll pay you ten thousand dollars and all expenses. Is it a bargain?"

"Let me hear the story first," suggested our hero, who was a cautious lad when there was need for it. Yet he liked Mr. Preston, even at first sight, in spite of his "loud" attire, and the rather "circusy" manner in which he had entered the

room. Then too, if he was a friend of Mr. Damon, that was a great deal in his favor.

"I am, as you know, in the circus business," began Mr. Preston. "I have a number of traveling shows, and several large museums in the big cities. I am always on the lookout for new attractions, for the public demands them. Once get in the rut of having nothing new, and your business will fall off. I know, for I've been in the business, man and boy, for nearly forty years. I began as a performer, and I can still do a double somersault over fifteen elephants in a row. I always keep in practice for there's nothing like showing a performer how to do a thing yourself.

"But about the giants, which is what I'm interested in most now. Of course I've had giants in my circuses and museums, from the beginning. The public wanted 'em and we had to have 'em. Some of 'em were fakes—men on stilts with long pants to cover up their legs, and others were the real, genuine, all-wool-and-a-yard-wide article. But none of them were very big. A shade under eight feet was the limit with me.

"I also have lots of wild animals, and it was when some of my men were out after some tapirs, jaguars and leopards that I got on the track of the giants. It was about a year ago, but up to this

time I haven't seen my way clear to send after the big men. It was this way:"

Mr. Preston assumed a more comfortable position in his chair, nodded at Mr. Damon, who was listening attentively to all that was said, and resumed.

"As I said I had sent Jake Poddington, one of my best men, after tapirs and some other South American animals. He didn't have very good luck hunting along the Amazon. In the first place that region has been pretty well cleaned out of circus animals, and another thing it's getting too well populated. Another thing is that you can't get the native hunters and beaters to work for you as they did years ago.

"So Poddington wrote to me that he was going to take his assistants, make a big jump, and hike it for the Argentine Republic. He had a tip that along the Salado river there might be something doing, and I told him to go ahead.

"He shipped me what few animals he had, and lit out for a three thousand mile journey. I didn't hear from him for some time, and, when I did, I got the finest collection of animals I had ever laid eyes on. I got them about the same time I did a letter from Jake, for the mail service ain't what you could call rushing in that part of South America."

"But what about the giants?" interrupted Mr. Damon.

"I'm coming to them," replied the circus man calmly. "It was this way: At the tail of his letter which he sent with the shipment of animals Jake said this, and I remember it almost word for word:

" 'If all goes well,' he wrote. 'I'll have a big surprise for you soon. I've heard a story about a race of big natives that have their stamping ground in this section, and I'm going to try for a few specimens. I know how much you want a giant.' "

"Well?" asked Tom, after a pause, for the circus man had ceased talking and was staring out of the opened library window into the garden that was just becoming green.

"That was all I ever heard from poor Jake," said Mr. Preston softly.

"Bless my insurance policy!" gasped Mr. Damon. "You didn't tell me that! What happened to him."

"I never could find out," resumed Mr. Preston. "I never heard another word from him, and I've never seen him from the time I parted with him to go after the animals. The letter saying he was going after the giants was the last line of his I've seen."

"But didn't you try to locate him?" asked Tom. "Didn't he have some companions—some one who could tell what became of him?"

"Of course I tried!" exclaimed Mr. Preston. "Do you think I'd let a man like Jake disappear without making some effort to find him? But he was the only white man in his party, the rest were natives. That was Jake's way. Well, when some time past and I didn't hear from him, I got busy. I wrote to our consuls and even some South American merchants with whom I had done business. But it didn't amount to anything."

"Couldn't you get any news?" asked Ned softly.

"Oh, yes, some, but it didn't amount to much. After a long time, and no end of trouble, I had a man locate a native named Zacatas, who was the head beater of the black men under Jake.

"Zacatas said that he and Jake and the others got safely to the Salado river section, but I knew that before, for that was where the fine shipment of animals came from. Then Jake got that tip about the giants, and set off alone into the interior to locate them, for all the natives were afraid to go. That was the last seen of poor Jake."

"Bless my fire shovel!" cried Mr. Damon. "What did Zacatas say became of the poor fellow?"

"No one knew. Whether he reached giant land and was killed there, or whether he was struck down by some wild beast in the jungle, I never could find out. The natives under Zacatas waited in camp for him for some time, and then went back to the Amazon region where they belonged. That's all the news I could get.

"But I'm sure there are giants in the interior of South America, for Jake always knew what he was talking about. Now I want to do two things. I want to get on the trail of poor Jake Poddington if I can ,and I want a giant—two or three of them if it can be managed.

"Ever since Jake disappeared I've been trying to arrange things to make a search for him, and for the giants, but up to now something has been in the way. I happened to mention the matter to my friend, Mr. Damon, and he at once spoke of you, Tom Swift.

"Now, what I want to know is this: Will you undertake to get a giant for me, rescue Jake Poddington if he is alive in the interior of South America, or, if he is dead, find out how it happened and give him decent burial? Will you do this, Tom Swift?"

There was a silence in the room following the dramatic and simple recital of the circus man. Tom was strangely moved, as was his chum Ned

As for Mr. Damon, he was softly blessing every thing he could think of.

Tom looked out of the long, opened windows of the library. In fancy he could see the forest and jungles of South America. He saw a sluggish river flowing along between rank green banks, while, from the overhanging trees, long festoons of moss hung down, writhing now and then as the big water anacondas or boa constrictors looped their sinuous folds over the low limbs.

In fancy he saw dark-skinned natives slinking along with their deadly blow guns, and poisoned arrows. He thought he could hear the low growls and whines of the treacherous jaguars and see their lithe bodies slinking along. He saw the brilliant-hued flowers, saw the birds of gorgeous plumage, and listened in fancy to their discordant cries.

Then, too, he saw a lonely white man in a miserable native hut thousands of miles from civilization, waiting, waiting, waiting for he knew not what fate. Again he saw monstrous men stalking along—men who towered ten feet or more, and who were big and brawny. All this passed through the mind of Tom in an instant.

"Well?" asked Mr. Preston softly.

"I'll go!" suddenly cried the young inventor. "I don't know whether I can get you a giant or

not, Mr. Preston, but if it's possible I'll get poor Jake Poddington, dead or alive!"

"Good!" cried the circus man, jumping up and clasping Tom's hand. "I thought you were that kind of a lad, after I heard Mr. Damon describe you. You've taken a big load off my heart, Tom Swift. Now to talk of ways and means! I'll have a giant yet, and maybe I'll get back the best man who ever shipped a consignment of wild animals, good Jake Poddington! Now to business!"

CHAPTER IV

"LOOK OUT FOR MY RIVAL!"

"You'll go in an airship of course; won't you, Tom?" asked Mr. Damon, when they had pulled their chairs up around a library table, and Mr. Preston had taken some papers from his pocket.

"An airship? No, I don't believe I shall," replied the young inventor. "In the first place, I'm a bit tired of scooting through the air so much, though it isn't to be denied that it's the quickest way of going. But in South America there are so many jungles that it will be hard to find a level starting ground for a take-off, after we land. Of course we could go up as a balloon, but this expedition is going to be different from any we were ever on before."

"How so?" asked Ned.

"Well, in the first place we've got to start at one end of a trail, and make careful inquiries all along the way. It isn't like when we went for the city of gold. There we had to look for a certain ruined temple, which was the landmark.

When we went after the platinum in Siberia we had to look for the place of the high winds, so I could use my air glider. But now we're trying to locate a man who traveled on foot through the jungles, and if we went in an airship we might just miss the connecting link.

"So, I think the best way will be to do just as Mr. Poddington did—travel on foot or by horses and mules, and go slowly, making inquiries from time to time. Then we *may* get to giant land, we *may* find him."

"I don't hope for all that," said the circus man, "but if you can only get some news of him it will be a relief. If he died peaceably it would be better than to be a captive among some of those savage tribes. It's been a year now since I heard the last of him. But I agree with Tom that an airship won't be much good in the jungle. You might take along a small one, if you could pack it, to scare the natives with. In fact it might be a good thing to show to the giants, if you find them."

"That is my idea," declared Tom. "I'll take the *Lark* with me. "That's a mighty powerful machine for its size, and it can be taken apart in sections. It will carry three on a pinch, and I have had five in her with two auxiliary seats. I'll take the *Lark,* and she may come in handy."

"When can you start?" asked Mr. Preston.

"As soon as we can fit out an expedition," answered Tom. "It oughtn't to take long. I don't have to build an air glider this time. It won't take long to take the *Lark* apart. I haven't finished work on my noisless airship yet, but that can wait. Yes, we'll be ready as soon as you want us to start, Mr. Preston."

"It can't be too soon for me. I'll deposit a certain sum in the bank to your credit, Tom, and you can draw on it for expenses. I'll pay any amount to get word of poor Jake, to say nothing of having a giant for my circus. Now as to ways of getting there. Have you a large map of South America?"

Tom had one, and he and the others were pouring over it when Tom's father came into the room.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "What's this? What are you up to now, Tom, my boy? Mrs. Baggert said you took down the South American map. What's up?"

"Lots, dad? I'm going after giants this time!"

"Giants, Tom? Are you joking?"

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Swift," answered Mr. Damon. "Bless my check book! I believe if some one wanted the moon Tom Swift would try to get it for them."

Then Mr. Swift noticed the stranger present, and was introduced to the circus man.

"Is it really true, Tom," asked the aged inventor, when the story had been related, "are you going to have a try for giant land?"

"That's what I am, dad, and I wish you were going along."

"No, Tom, I'm getting too old for that. But I did hope you'd stay home for a while, and help me work on my gyroscope invention. It is almost completed."

"I will help you, dad, as soon as I get back with a giant or two. Who knows? maybe I'll get one myself."

"What would you do with one?" asked Ned with a laugh.

"Have him help Eradicate," answered the young inventor. "Rad is getting pretty old, and he needs an assistant."

"But are these giants black?" asked Mr. Swift.

"That's a point I don't know," answered the circus man frankly. "Jake didn't say in his letter. They may be black, white or midway between. That's what Tom has got to find out for us."

"And I'll do it!" exclaimed our hero. "Now let's see. I suppose the best plan would be to take a ship right to the Rio de la Plata, landing

say at Buenos Ayres or Montevideo, and then organize an expedition to strike into the interior."

"Why don't you do just as Mr. Poddington did?" asked Ned, "start from the Amazon and work south?"

"It would take too long," declared Tom. "We know that the giants are somewhere in the northern part of Argentina, or in Paraguay or Uruguay. Or they may be on the other side of the Uruguay river in Brazil. It's quite a stretch of territory, and we've got to take our time exploring it. That's why I don't want to waste time working down from the Amazon. We'll go right to Buenos Ayres, I think."

"That's what I'd do," advised the old circus man. "Now I can give you some points on what to take, and how to act when you get there. The South Americans are a queer people—very nice when treated right, but very bad if not," and then he told some of his experiences as a circus man in South America, for he had traveled there.

"I'd go again, if my business didn't keep me here," he concluded, "for I'd ask nothing better than to hunt for giant land, or try to rescue poor Jake. But I can't. I'm depending on you, Tom Swift.

"What's that? Giant land?" exclaimed Mrs. Baggert, the motherly housekeeper, as she came

in to announce that dinner was ready. "You don't mean to tell me, Tom, that you're going off again?"

"That's what I am, Mrs. Baggert. You'd better put me up a few sandwiches, for I don't know when I'll be back," and Tom winked at his chum.

"Oh, of all things I ever heard in all my born days!" cried the housekeeper, throwing up her hands. "Will you ever settle down, Tom Swift?"

"Maybe he will when Miss Mary Nestor is ready to settle down too," said Ned mischievously, referring to a girl of whom Tom was very fond.

"Say, I'll fix you for that!" cried our hero, as he made an unsuccessful grab for Ned. "But, Mrs. Baggert, can you put on a couple of extra plates? Mr. Damon and Mr. Preston will stay to lunch."

"Not if it's going to put you out, Tom," objected the circus man. "I can go to the hotel, and——"

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Baggert graciously, for she prided herself on her housekeeping arrangements, and she used to say that unexpected company never "flustrated" her. Soon the little party was seated around the table, where the talk went from grave to gay, the subject of the giants being uppermost.

Mr. Preston told many funny stories of his circus days, and some of them had the spice of danger in them, for he had been all over the world, either as a performer or as the owner of amusement enterprises.

"Now, the next question to be settled," said the old circus man, when they were once more gathered in the library, "is how many are going?"

"I am, for one!" exclaimed Ned quickly. "I'm sure my folks will let me. Especially as we aren't going to use an airship, but will travel just as ordinary folks do."

"Except in case of emergency," explained Tom. "We'll have the *Lark* to use if we need her."

"Oh, of course," agreed Ned. "How about you, Mr. Damon? Will you go?"

The odd man looked around the room before replying, as though he feared someone might be listening on the sly.

"Go on, Andy Foger isn't here," invited Tom with a laugh.

"I'll go—if I can pursuade my wife to let me," said the odd man in a whisper, as if, even then, the good lady might overhear him. "I'm not going to say anything about giants. I'll tell her we are going to rescue a poor fellow from—

er—well from the natives of South America, and I'm sure she'll consent. Of course I'll go."

"That's three," remarked Tom. "I think I can get Eradicate to go. He doesn't like airships, and when he knows we're not going in one it will please him. Then he likes it hot, and I guess South America is about as warm as they come. I am almost sure we can count on Rad."

"That will make a nice party," commented the circus man. "Now I'll make out a list of the supplies you'd better take, and tell you what to do about getting native helpers, and so on," and with that he plunged into the midst of details that took up most of the remainder of the day.

"Well, then I guess that settles most everything," remarked Tom, several hours later. "I'll begin at once to take the *Lark* apart for shipment, and begin ordering the things we need."

"Oh, there's one thing I almost forgot about," said Mr. Preston suddenly. "Queer, how I should overlook that, too. I don't suppose you mind a fight or two; do you?" he asked, looking sharply at Tom.

"Well, it all depends. We've had several fights on other expeditions, though I can't say that I like 'em," replied the young inventor. "Why do you ask?"

"Because you may have one—or several," was

the answer of the circus man. "You'll have to beware of my rival."

"Your rival?"

"Yes, the bitterest foe I have is a rival circus man named Wayland Waydell. He, or some of his men, are always camping on my trail when I send out after a new consignment of wild animals, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised but what he'd try to get ahead of me on the giant game."

"But how does he know you want giants?" asked Tom.

"Because news of circus expeditions always leaks out somehow or other. I'm sure Waydell will learn that you are acting for me, and so I warn you in time. In fact, he tried to get ahead of me when I sent Jake Poddington out over a year ago, and I always had my suspicions that he had a hand in Jake's disappearance, but maybe I'm wrong. So that's what I mean when I say beware of Wayland Waydell, Tom."

"I will!" exclaimed Tom. "He'll have to get up early to get ahead of us." But Tom little knew the man against whom he was to pit himself in the search for giants.

CHAPTER V

ANDY FOGER LEARNS SOMETHING

ONCE Tom Swift made up his mind to do a thing, he did not waste time in setting about it. He had decided to go to giant land, and that was all there was to it. His father talked with him about the matter, pointed out the dangers, and suggested that, as the young inventor had had many adventures in the last few years, and had made considerable money from the discovery of the city of gold, and the platinum mines, the prize offered for a giant was not much of an inducement.

"But it isn't that so much, dad," explained Tom. "There's that poor circus man, maybe suffering in the centre of South America. I want to find him, if I can, or get some news that he died a natural death, and is decently buried."

"You never can do it, Tom."

"Well, dad, I'm going to make a big try!" he returned; and that settled it as far as Tom was concerned.

For several days after the visit of Mr. Preston Tom was busy making plans for his trip to South America. He wanted to lay out a regular schedule before proceeding. Ned Newton had had hard work to persuade his folks to let him go, but they finally consented, and as for Mr. Damon, his plan was simple.

Without mentioning giants at all, he took Mr. Preston home with him, and the circus man's tale of his assistant lost in the wilds of South America was too much for Mrs. Damon.

"Go? Of course you'll go!" she said to her husband. "I demand that you go, and I want you to find that poor man and rescue him. If you could rescue the exiles from uncivilized Siberia I'm sure you can get a man out of a civilized country."

Mr. Damon did not stop to point out that South America was far less civilized, in some ways, than was Russia. He just kept still, and made his preparations to go. Mr. Preston was a distant relative of the odd man, and that was how he had happened to meet him and hear the story which was destined to play such an important part in the life of Tom Swift.

"Do you think we'll have much trouble after we get to South America, and strike into the interior?" asked Mr. Damon one afternoon, when

he and Mr. Preston were helping Tom in the delicate work of packing the wing planes of the *Lark*.

"No, South America isn't a bad country to travel in," replied the circus man. "The natives are fairly friendly, and with a well-organized party, and plenty of money, which I shall see that you have, you ought to get along swimmingly. Only one thing bothers me."

"What's that?" asked Tom quickly.

"That's my rival, Waydell. He's sure to make trouble if he gets on your trail."

"Have you heard from him?"

"No, and that's what makes me all the more suspicious. If he'd come out and fight me in the open it wouldn't be so bad. But this underhand business gets on my nerves. I don't know what he's up to."

"Maybe he isn't up to anything," suggested Ned. "He may not even know you are going to make another try for the giants."

"Oh, yes, he does," replied the circus man. "He didn't succeed in beating me when poor Jake was after them, for the simple reason that it was a snap case, and even I didn't know that Poddington was trying for the giants until he had started. But Waydell was soon after him, and he knows that when I once set out for a freak or

a certain kind of animal I keep on until I get it. So he has probably already figured out that I'm making new plans to get a giant."

"But how will he know that I am going?" inquired Tom.

"I don't know how he will know, but he will. We circus men have queer ways of finding out things. I shouldn't be a bit surprised but what he was already plotting and scheming to send an expedition on my trail, to take advantage of anything you may learn."

"Well, we'll try and fool him, the same as we did the Mexicans when we hunted for the city of gold," spoke Tom; and then putting aside that worry, he and the others labored hard to get matters in shape for a departure to South America.

"I suppose Eradicate is going," remarked Ned, in the intervals of packing the aeroplane.

"Well, I've hinted it to him," replied Tom, "but I haven't asked him outright. He said he wouldn't mind going to a hot country though. Here he comes now. Guess I'll see how he takes it."

The colored man shuffled up with a hammer and nails, for he had been putting covers on packing boxes.

"Then you are coming with us to South

America; aren't you, Rad?" asked Tom, winking at Ned.

"Souf America? Am dat de hot country yo'-all was referencin' to?" asked Eradicate.

"That's it, Rad. It's nice and warm there. All you have to do is to lie under a tree and cocoanuts will drop off into your mouth."

"Cocoanuts in mah mouf, Massa Tom! 'Scuse me! I doan't want t' go to no sich country as dat. Cocoanuts in mah mouf! Why I ain't got but a few teef left, an' a cocoanut droppin' offen a tree would shorely knock dem teef out, shorely!"

"Oh, Rad, I didn't mean cocoanuts! I meant oranges and bananas—they're soft," and Tom glanced quickly at Ned, for he saw that he had made a mistake.

"Oh, well, den dat's diffunt, Massa Tom. I jes lubs oranges an' bananas, an' ef yo'-all is shore dat I'll find some, why, I'll come along."

"Find 'em? Of course you will!" cried Ned.

"And cocoanuts, too," added Tom. "Only, Rad, I meant to say that the monkeys would throw the cocoanuts down to you from the trees. That breaks the hard shells you see, and all you have to do is to take out the meat, and drink the milk. Then the monkeys throw you down a palm leaf fan to cool yourself off, while you're eating

it. Oh, I tell you, Rad, South America is the place to go to have a good time."

"I believe you, Massa Tom. When do we-all start?"

"Pretty soon now."

"An' what all am yo' gwine arter, Massa Tom?"

The young inventor thought a moment. In times past he had not hesitated to confide in his colored helper, but of late years Eradicate had become somewhat childish, and he talked more than was necessary. Tom wondered whether it would be safe to trust the giant secret to him. After a moment's thought he realized that it would not be. But, at the same time, he knew that if he did not give some kind of an answer Eradicate would become suspicious, and that would be worse. The colored helper had been with Tom on too many trips not to know that his master never went without some object.

"Well, Rad, we're after big game this time," Tom said. "I don't know what it will be that we'll get, whether animals or plants, and——"

"Oh, I knows, Massa Tom. Yo'-all means dem orchard plants that lib on air—dem big orchard plants." Eradicate meant orchids, of which many rare and beautiful kinds are found in South America.

"Yes, Rad, I guess we will get some big orchids," agreed Tom.

"An' I shorely will help climb de trees arter 'em. Or maybe we kin git de monkeys to frow em down, same as dey will de cocoanuts."

"Maybe, Rad. Well, now go ahead and nail up the rest of these boxes. We want to get started as soon as we can," and the colored man got busy, murmuring from time to time something about oranges and bananas and cocoanuts.

Everyone was occupied in getting matters in shape for the trip to South America, even Mr. Swift laying aside his work on his pet invention —a gyroscope—while he helped his son. And had Tom not been quite so engrossed with his preparations he might have gone about town more, in which case he would have learned something that might have saved him and the others considerable trouble and no little danger. And this fact was that Andy Foger had been in Shopton several times lately.

After the trouble which the red-haired bully and his father caused Tom and his friends on their trip to the city of gold, Mr. Foger moved away from Shopton. He had lost his fortune and had to begin all over again. The Foger homestead was closed up, and Andy ceased to be

a fixture of the town, for which Tom and Ned were very glad.

But of late Andy had been seen in Shopton several times, and it was noticed that, on one or two occasions, he had a man with him—a man who seemed to have plenty of money—a man with an air about him not unlike that of Mr. Preston. A man with what newspaper men would have called a circus or theatrical "air."

This man had visited Shopton soon after Mr. Preston made the giant proposition to Tom, and before meeting Andy Foger had made special inquiries about Tom Swift.

"Who are the people who have a hard feeling against this young inventor in town?" the man had asked of several persons.

"Tom Swift has more friends than enemies," was the general reply.

"Oh, surely he must have some enemies," the man insisted. "He's been running his aeroplanes and autos around town a long time, and surely there must be some one who has a grudge against him. I suppose he has lots of friends, but who are his enemies?"

Then he learned about Andy Foger, and, hearing that Andy now lived in a nearby town, the man had at once gone there. It was not long be-

fore he reappeared—and the red-haired bully was with him.

"And you haven't learned anything yet, Andy?" asked this mysterious man one afternoon, when he met his tool in a quiet resort in Shopton.

"Nothing yet, Mr. Waydell. But give me a little more time."

"Time! You've had more time now than you need. When I agreed to pay you for finding out what part of South America Tom Swift would head for to get some sort of a freak or animal for Preston's circus I thought you'd make good quicker than this."

"So did I. But you see Tom is suspicious of me, and so is his chum, Ned Newton. I can't go to them, and if I'm seen sneaking around the house or shop, after what happened last, I'll be driven off."

"Well, it's up to you. I paid you to get the information and I expect you to do it. Why don't you tackle that old colored man whom, I understand, works for him? He ought to be simple enough to give the game away."

"Eradicate? I will! I never thought of that. I'll get that information for you, Mr. Waydell, in a few days."

"You'd better, if you want to keep that money."

The two plotters parted, and that very afternoon gave Andy the chance he wanted. He met Eradicate on his way to the village where he was going after something Tom needed.

"Hello, Rad!" called Andy with a show of good feeling. "I haven't seen you in some time. I suppose you're getting too old to travel around with Tom any more?"

"Gittin' too old!" exclaimed the colored man indignantly, for that was his sore point. "What yo'-all mean, Andy Foger? I ain't gittin' old, an' neider am Boomerang."

"Oh, I thought you were, as you haven't been on any trips lately."

"I ain't, hey? Well I's gwine on one right soon, let me tell you dat, Andy Foger!"

"No! Is that so? Glad to hear it. Up to the North Pole I suppose?"

"No, sah; not much! No cold country for this coon! I's gwine where it's nice an 'warm, an' where de cocoanuts fall in yo' mouf—I mean where de bananas an' oranges fall in you mouf, an' de monkeys frow down cocoanuts an' palm leaf fans to yo'!"

"Where's that, Rad?" asked Andy, and he tried to make his voice sound indifferent, as though the matter did not interest him.

"South America, dat's where it am, an' I's

gwine wif Massa Tom. We's gwine t' git a monstrous big orchard plant."

"Oh, yes; I've heard about them. Well, I hope you get all the oranges and bananas you want. South America, eh? I suppose along the Amazon river, where they have crocodiles forty feet long, that are always hungry."

"No, sah! No crockermiles fo' me! We ain't goin' neah de Amerzon riber at all. We's gwine away down in de middle part of South America. It's a place suffin laik Gomeonaway—or Goonaway, or suffin' laik dat."

"Oh, yes; I know where you mean!" and Andy could hardly conceal the note of triumph in his voice. He had the very information he wanted from the simple colored man. "Yes, I guess there are no crocodiles there, and plenty of monkeys and cocoanuts. Well, I hope you have a good time," and Andy hurried away to seek out the rival circus man.

CHAPTER VI

ALARMING NEWS

"HAND me that hammer, Ned."

"There it is, right behind you, on the bench."

"Oh, so it is. Here are those nails you were asking for."

"Good. Now we'll make things hum," and Ned Newton's voice was drowned in the rapid driving of nails into boards.

"Bless my screw driver!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Damon, who was sawing planks to make covers for boxes.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom, looking up from a bundle he was tying up. It contained the magneto of his aeroplane and he was putting waterproof paper about it. "Did you cut your finger?"

"No, but I just happened to think that I nailed my watch up in that last box."

"Nailed up your watch!" cried Mr. Preston, who, after a trip to New York to make arrangements for passages on a steamer, had come back to help Tom pack up.

"Yes, I took it out to see how long it took me to make a box cover, and then Tom asked me to nail up that box containing the motor parts, and I laid my watch right down on top, and put the boards over it."

"Well, the only thing to do is to take off the cover," remarked Tom grimly.

"Bless my chronometer! That will delay things," said the odd man with a sigh. "But I suppose there is no hope for it," and he proceeded to open the box, while Tom, Ned, the circus man and Eradicate busied themselves over the hundred and one things to be done before they would be ready for the trip to the interior of South America.

"Look out, Ned!" called Tom. "You're making those top boards too long. They'll stick out over the edge, and be ripped off if the box catches on anything."

"Yes, you can't be too careful," cautioned Mr. Preston. "Each box or package must be the right weight, or the porters and mule drivers won't carry them into the interior. You may have to cross rough trails, and even ford rivers. And as for bridges! well, the less said about them the better. You aren't going to have any picnic, and if you want to back out, Tom Swift, now is the time to say so."

"What! Back out?" cried our hero. "Never! I said I'd go and I'm going. Ned, pass that brace and bit over, will you. I've got to bore a hole for these screws."

And so the work went on in the big aeroplane shed, which they had made their packing headquarters.

The *Lark,* that small, but strong and speedy aeroplane, had been safely packed, and most of it had been sent on ahead to New York, where the travellers were to take the steamer. There remained to be transported their clothing, weapons and ammunition, and several bundles and cases of trinkets which would be of more value in bartering with the natives than money. Tom and Mr. Preston had selected the things with great care, and at the last moment the young inventor had packed a box of his own, and said nothing about it. Included in it were some of his own and his father's inventions, and had one been given a glance into that same box he would have wondered at the queer things.

"What in the world are you taking with you, anyhow?" asked Ned, of his chum, noticing the mysterious box.

"You'll see, if we ever get to giant land," replied Tom with a smile.

"How long before we can start?" asked Mr.

Damon, late that day, when most of the hard work had been finished. He was as anxious and as eager as either of the youths to make a start.

"We ought to be ready at least a week from to-day," replied Tom, "and perhaps sooner."

"Sooner, if you can make it," suggested Mr. Preston. "The steamer sails a week from to-day, and if you miss that one you'll have to wait two weeks more."

"Then a week from to-day we'll sail," decided Tom, with emphasis. "We'll work nights getting things in shape."

Really, though, not much more remained to be done, and the next day Mr. Preston again went to New York, accompanying a shipment of boxes and cases that Tom sent on ahead.

The two chums were busy in the aeroplane hangar a few days after this, nailing up the last of some light cases containing medicines, personal effects and comforts that would accompany them on their trip.

"Well, I'm glad of one thing," remarked Tom thoughtfully, as he drove home the last nail in a box, "and that is that we won't be bothered with that Andy Foger on this trip. I haven't seen hide nor hair of him in some time. I guess he and his father are down and out."

"I guess so. I haven't seen him either."

"Massa Andy were in town a few days ago," ventured Eradicate.

"He was?" cried Tom. "Did you see him? What was he doing, Rad?"

"Nuffin, same as usual. He done say I were too old to go on any more hexpiditions wif yo' an' I proved dat I wasn't."

"Proved that you weren't, Rad? How?" And Tom looked anxiously at his colored helper.

"Why, I done say t' him dat I was gwine wif yo'-all dis time, t' dat Comeaway country after a big orchard plant. Dat's how I done prove it to dat Andy Foger."

"Rad, you didn't tell him we were going to South America?" asked Tom reproachfully.

"Suah I done so, Massa Tom. Dat were de only way t' prove t' him dat I wa'an't gittin' too old."

"Oh, Rad! I'm afraid——" and Tom hesitated.

"Oh, I don't believe it amounted to anything," interposed Ned. "Andy didn't have any one with him, did he, Rad?"

"No, Massa Ned. He were all alone by hisse'f."

"Then I guess it's all right, Tom. Andy was only rigging Eradicate, and he didn't pay any attention to what he said."

"Well, I hope so," and the young inventor wore a thoughtful air as he resumed the finish of the packing.

The colored man, blissfully unconscious that he had been the innocent cause of a grave danger that overhung Tom and his friends, whistled gaily as he gathered the boxes, bales and packages into a pile, ready for the expressman, who was to call in the morning.

Tom, together with Ned, Mr. Damon and Eradicate, were to leave the following afternoon, and stay in New York until the sailing of the steamer. They preferred to be a day or so ahead of time than half an hour late, and were taking no chances.

"Bless my timetable!" exclaimed Mr. Damon that night, as they sat in the library of the Swift home, checking over the lists to make sure that nothing had been forgotten, "bless my timetable, but it doesn't seem possible that we are going to start at last."

"Yes, we'll soon be on the way to giant land," spoke Tom in a low voice. Somehow the young inventor did not seem to be in his usually bright spirits.

"You don't seem very enthusiastic," remarked Ned. "What's the matter, Tom?"

"Oh, nothing much. Though I would feel

better if I knew that Andy Foger didn't have any inkling of what our plans were," he added, for Eradicate was not present.

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed his chum. "Mr. Preston will be here in the morning, and he'll know whether his rival has any idea of camping on our trail. Cheer up!"

"Yes, I suppose I am foolish to worry," admitted Tom, "but, somehow I can't help it. I wish Mr. Preston was here now to tell us that Wayland Waydell had gone off to the centre of Africa for a dwarf. Then I'd know we had nothing to fear. But I guess——"

Tom did not finish his sentence for, at that moment, there came a peal at the door bell. Instinctively every one started, and Mr. Damon exclaimed:

"Bless my burglar alarm! What's that?"

"Someone at the door, Tom," replied Mr. Swift calmly. "That's nothing unusual. It's early yet."

But, in spite of his reassuring words, there was a feeling of vague alarm.

"I'll see who it is," volunteered Ned. "If it's Andy Foger——"

Mrs. Baggert entered the room at that moment. She had hurried to the door, and, as she entered she announced:

"Mr. Preston!"

"Yes, it is I!" added the circus man following her quickly into the room. "I came on to-night instead of waiting for the morning, Tom. I have bad news for you!"

"Bad news!" gasped the young inventor. "Has Waydell got hold of your plans."

"I'll wager it has something to do with Andy Foger!" exclaimed Ned.

"Neither one," spoke the circus man. "But I have just had a cable dispatch from one of my animal agents in Brazil, saying that war has broken out among the tribes in the central part of South America. A big native war is being waged all around giant land, as near as we can figure it out."

"War among the native tribes!" exclaimed Mr. Swift.

"Yes, and one of the worst in years. Of course, Tom, after such alarming news as this I won't hold you to your promise to go. It's all off. I'm sorry, but you'd better wait. It won't be safe to go there now. Better unpack, Tom."

For a moment there was a silence in the room. Then the young inventor leaped to his feet and faced the circus man.

"Unpack?" cried Tom in ringing tones. "Never! I'm going to giant land, fight or no

fight! Ned, come with me and we'll put in some of my electric rifles. I wasn't going to take them along, but I will now. Unpack? I guess not! I'm going to get a giant for you, Mr. Preston, and save Jake Poddington if he's alive. Come on, Ned.

CHAPTER VII

FIRE ON BOARD

"YOUR electric rifles!" exclaimed Ned Newton, as he followed his chum to the storeroom, where Tom kept a number of spare guns. "It's a good thing you thought of them, Tom."

"Yes, I didn't think we'd need them, for I believe peaceable means are the best to use on natives. But if there's a war, and we have to defend ourselves against the tribes, we'll take along something that will do more damage than an ordinary rifle, and yet I can regulate it so that it will only stun, and not kill."

"That's the stuff, Tom. No use in being needlessly cruel. "How many will you take?"

"Two or three. We may need 'em all."

A little later the two lads returned to the library where Mr. Damon, Mr. Swift and the circus man were anxiously awaiting them. Mr. Preston looked curiously at several objects which Tom and Ned carried. The objects looked liked guns but were different from any the giant-seeker had seen.

"What are they?" he asked Tom.

"Electric rifles. One of my inventions," and Tom showed how the weapon worked. Those of you who have read the volume entitled, "Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle" will remember this curious weapon. It was worked by a stored charge of magnetism of the wireless kind. By this a concentrated globule of electricity was projected from the muzzle, and it could be made strong or weak at the will of the marksman. It could be made so powerful that it would totally annihilate a whale, as Tom had once proved, or it could be made so mild that it would put an enemy, or several of them, to sleep almost as gently as some narcotic, and they would awaken after several hours, little the worse for their experience.

A charge of electricity as powerful as five thousand volts could be concentrated into a small wireless globule the size of a bullet, and this would fly through space, or even through solid objects until, reaching the limit of the range set, would strike the object aimed at. With his wonderful electric rifle Tom had not only killed elephants, and other big game, but fought off the red pygmies of Africa.

"And we may have a use for it in South Amer-

ica," he added as he explained the workings to Mr. Preston.

"Well, I'm glad you didn't back out," commented the circus man, "and this may come in mighty handy. I'll feel easier about you now, Tom, when I know you have some electric rifles with you."

The circus man was told of what Eradicate had said to Andy, but he was of the opinion that no harm would result from it.

"As far as I can learn," went on Mr. Preston, "my old rival Waydell has given up the giant idea. He is looking for a two-headed crocodile, said to be somewhere along the Nile river, and he's fitting out an expedition there I understand. I guess we won't be bothered with him. But the giant for mine! If I get that sort of an attraction his two-headed crocodile won't be in it. I hope you have luck, Tom Swift."

The last details of the expedition were considered. Nothing seemed to have been left undone, and though carrying the electric rifles would make a little more baggage, no one minded that.

"I kin carry dem," said Eradicate. "I ain't got much baggage of mah own."

So it was arranged, and early the next morning the little band of intrepid travelers, who were going in search of giant land, started for New

York. They little knew what was ahead of them, nor what dire perils they were to pass through.

Of course Tom had said good-bye to Mary Nestor and half-jokingly, he had promised to bring back a giant of his own, that she might see one outside of a circus.

"But, Tom," Mary exclaimed with a laugh, "what will you do with one of the big creatures if you get one?"

"Have him help me on my newest invention—the noiseless airship," answered the young inventor. "I need some one to lift heavy weights. It will save putting up a derrick. Yes, I think I'll get a giant of my own."

The last good-byes were said, and the parting between Tom and his father was affecting.

"I'll soon be back, dad," he said in as cheerful a tone as he could assume, "and I'll help you finish your gyroscope."

"I hope you will, Tom," and then, with a pressure of his son's hand, Mr. Swift turned away and went into the house, closing the door after him.

The first part of the trip to New York was rather a silent one, no one caring to talk much. Eradicate was the only cheerful member of the party, which included the circus man, who was

going as far as the steamer with Tom and his friends.

"Say," Ned exclaimed finally, "any one would think we were going to a funeral!"

"That's right," agreed Tom. "I guess something is on all our nerves. Let's do something to take it off. Here comes a boy with some funny papers. We'll buy some and read all the jokes."

This proved a diversion, and before the train had gone many miles more the giant-hunters were talking and laughing as though they were merely starting on a short pleasure trip, instead of an an expedition to the dangerous jungles of South America.

They put up at a good hotel in New York, and as soon as they were established Tom and Mr. Preston went to the steamer *Calaban* which was to land them at Buenos Ayres. They found that there was some confusion about their luggage and boxes, and it took them the better part of a day to get the tangle straightened out, and their stuff stored together in one hold.

"It will be easier to get it out if it's all together," said Tom, at the conclusion of their labors, and then he and the circus man returned to the hotel. The ship was to sail two days later, and, several hours before the time set for

the departure, Tom and his friends were on board.

"You don't see anything of your rival circus friend, do you?" asked Tom, of the man who wanted a giant.

"Not a sign," was the answer, as Mr. Preston glanced over the throng of on-coming passengers. "I guess we've either given him the slip, or he's given up the game. You won't have to worry about him. Just take it easy until you start for the interior, and from then on you'll have hard work enough."

The last of the cargo was being taken aboard, the late passengers had arrived and were anxiously watching to see that their baggage was not lost. As Mr. Preston stood talking with Tom near the gangplank, a clerical looking gentleman approached the circus man.

"I beg your pardon," he began in mild accents, "but could you tell me where my stateroom is?" and he showed his ticket. "I'm not used to traveling," he needlessly added for that fact was very evident. Mr. Preston informed him how to get to his berth, and the gentleman went on: "Are you going all the way to Buenos Ayres?"

"No, but my friend is," and the circus man nodded at Tom.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" the stranger exclaimed.

"Then I shall have someone of whom I can ask questions. I am quite lost when I travel."

"I'll help you all I can," volunteered Tom, "and I'll show you to your stateroom now."

"Ah, thank you. Your name is——"

"Tom Swift," supplied the young inventor.

"Ah, yes, I believe I have read about your airships. I am the Reverend Josiah Blinderpool. I am taking a little vacation. I trust we shall become good friends."

"Humph, he's a regular infant, to be away from civilization," mused Tom, when he had showed the clergyman to the proper stateroom. "He'll get into trouble, he's so innocent."

If he could have seen that same "clergyman" double up with mirth when he had closed his stateroom door after him, Tom would not have felt so sure about that same "innocence."

"To think that I was talking face to face with Sam Preston and he never tumbled to who I was!" exclaimed the newcomer softly. "That's rich! Now if I play my cards right I shouldn't be surprised but what they'd invite me to come along with them. That would just suit me. I wouldn't have any trouble then, getting on the track of those giants. The information Waydell got from that red-haired Foger chap wasn't

any too definite," and once more the man wearing the garb of a minister chuckled.

"Well, I'll say good-bye," remarked Mr. Preston, a little later, when the warning bell had rung. "I guess you'll get along all right. I haven't seen a sign of Waydell, or any of his slick agents. You'll have no trouble I guess."

But if the circus man could have seen the "clergyman" at that same time looking over letters addressed to "Hank Delby," and signed "Wayland Waydell" he would not have been so confident.

Mr. Preston bade good-bye to his friends, the gangplank was hauled up, and a hoarse blast came from the whistle of the *Calaban*.

"Bless my pocketbook!" cried Mr. Damon. "We're off""

"Yep, off t' git dat big, giant orchard plant," chimed in Eradicate.

"Hush!" exclaimed Tom, who did not like the use of the word "giant" even in that connection. "Don't tell everyone our business, Rad."

"Dat's right, Massa Tom. "I clean done forgot dat it's a sort of secret. I'll keep mighty still 'bout it."

The *Calaban* swung out into the river and began steaming down the bay.

The first week of the voyage was uneventful

The weather was exceptionally fine, and hardly any one was seasick. The Reverend Mr. Blinderpool was often on deck, and he made it a point to cultivate the acquaintance of Tom and his friends In spite of the fact that he said he had traveled very little, he seemed to know much about hidden corners of the world, but always, as on an occasion when he had accidently let slip some remark that showed he had been in far-off China or Asia, he would suddenly change the conversation when it verged to travel.

"There's something queer about that minister," said Ned after one of these occasions, "but I can't decide what it is."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Tom, who rather liked the man.

"No nonsense about it. Why should a minister take a trip like this when he isn't sick, and when he isn't going to establish a mission in South America? There's something queer about it, for, by his own words he just took this voyage as a whim."

"Oh, you're too fussy," declared Tom; and for the time the subject was dropped.

They ran into a storm when about ten days out, and for a while they had a rough time of it, and then the weather cleared again.

It was one evening, after the formal dinner,

when Tom and Ned were strolling about on deck, before turning in, that, the quiet of the ship was broken by what is always an alarming cry at sea.

"Fire! Fire!" shouted a man, pointing to a thin wisp of smoke curling up from the deck amidships.

"Keep quiet!" yelled one of the stewards. "It is nothing!

"It's a fire, I tell you!" insisted the man, and several others took up the cry.

A panic was imminent, and the captain came running from his quarters.

"What is it?" he asked.

An officer hurried to his side, and said something but in such a low voice that Tom, who was standing close beside the two, scarcely heard it. But he did hear this:

"There's a fire, sir, in hold number seventeen. We have turned the hose in there, and the pumps are working."

"Very good, Mr. Meld. Now try and quiet the passengers. Tell them it doesn't amount to much, and if it does we can flood that compartment."

Tom started at that.

"Come on, Ned!" he cried, grabbing his chum by the arm.

"Why, what's up? What's the matter?"

"Matter? Matter enough! The fire is in the hold where all our stuff is stored, and if the flames reach that box I packed last—well, I wouldn't give much for the ship!" and fairly dragging his chum along, Tom raced for the place where the smoke was now coming up in thicker clouds.

CHAPTER VIII

A NARROW ESCAPE

"HERE, come back! You can't go past here!"

"But I've got to go! I tell you I must go! It's important!"

The first speaker was one of the ship's officers, and the other was Tom Swift, who, accompanied by his chum, was trying to get past a rope that had been hastily stretched in front of the hold where the smoke was rolling up in ever-thickening clouds.

"It's important that you stay where you are," insisted the officer. "Look here young man, do you want to start a panic? You know what that is on board ship. Keep cool, we'll get the fire out all right."

"I am cool," responded Tom, and, though he did look a bit excited, he was calm enough to know what he was doing.

"Then keep back!"insisted the officer.

A crowd was gathering and there were omi-

nous whispers sent back and forth. Some hysterical women were beginning to scream, and there were anxious looks on all faces.

"I tell you it's important that I go down there," insisted Tom. "I want to get a box——"

"We'll look after the baggage of the passengers," declared the officer. "You don't need to worry, young man."

"But I tell you I do!" and Tom's voice was loud now. "It isn't so much on my account, as——" and then, stepping quickly to the side of the officer he whispered something.

"What!" cried the officer. "You don't tell me! That was a risk! I guess I'll have to help you get it out. Here, Mr. Simm," he called to one of the mates, "stand guard here. I'm going down into the hold with this young man."

"Shall I come?" cried Ned.

"No, you go stay with Mr. Damon and Eradicate," answered Tom. "Tell them everything is all right. And for cats' sake keep Rad cool. Don't let him get excited and start a panic. I'll be back in a minute."

With that Tom and the officer disappeared from view, and Ned, after wondering what it was all about, hastened to reassure Mr. Damon and the colored man that there was no danger, though from the manner in which Tom had acted

his chum was convinced that something was wrong.

Meanwhile our hero, accompanied by the officer, was groping his way through the thick smoke in the compartment. The officer had switched on the electric lights, and they shone with a yellow haze through the clouds of choking vapor.

"Can you see it?" asked the officer anxiously.

"I had it put where I could easily get at it," answered Tom with a cough, for some of the smoke had got down his throat. "I had an idea I might need it in a hurry. Here it is!" and he pointed to a large box, marked with his initials in red paint. "Give me a hand and we'll get it out."

"Yes, and send it on deck. See, there's the fire!" and the officer pointed to where a glow could be seen amid some bales of cotton. "It will be slow burning, that's one good thing, and by turning steam into this compartment we can soon put it out."

"It's pretty close to my box," commented Tom, "but there isn't as much danger as I thought."

It did not take him and the officer long to move the box away from its proximity to the fire, for the case was not heavy, though it was of good size, and then the officer having called up an

order to some of his fellow seamen on deck, a rope was let down, and the box hoisted up.

"Whew! That was a narrow escape!" exclamed Tom as he saw his case go up on deck. "I suppose I shouldn't have had that stored here. But there were so many things to think of that I forgot."

"Yes, it was a risk," commented the officer. "But what are you going to do with that sort of stuff, anyhow?"

"I may need it when we get among the wild tribes of South American Indians," answered Tom non-commitally. "I'm much obliged for your help."

"Oh, that's nothing. Anything to save the ship."

At that moment there were confused cries, and a series of shouts and commands up on deck.

"We'd better hurry out of here," said the officer.

"Why?"

"The captain has just ordered steam turned in here. I hope there isn't anything of yours that will be damaged by it."

"No, everything else is in waterproof coverings. Come on, we'll climb out."

They hurried from the compartment and, a little later clouds of quenching steam were poured

in from a hose run from the boiler room. The hatch was battened down, and then the smoke ceased to come up.

"The danger is practically over," the captain assured the frightened passengers. "The fire will be all out by morning. You may go to your staterooms in perfect safety."

Some did, and others, disbelieving, hung around the hatch-cover, sniffing and peering to discover traces of smoke. But the sailors had done their work well, and a stranger would not have known that a fire was in the hold.

The captain had spoken truly, and in the morning the fire was completely out, a few charred bales of cotton being the only things damaged. They were hauled up and dumped into the sea, while Tom, making a hasty inspection of his other goods placed in that compartment saw, to his relief, that beyond one case of trinkets, designed for barter with the natives, nothing had been damaged, and even the trinkets could be used on a pinch.

"But what was in that box?" asked Ned, that night as they got ready to retire, the excitement having calmed down.

"Hush! Not so loud," cautioned Tom, for Mr. Damon was in the next stateroom, while Eradicate had one across the corridor. "I'll tell

you, Ned, but don't breathe a word of it to Rad or Mr. Damon. They might not intend to give it away, but I'm afraid they would, if they knew, and I depend on the things in that box to give the native giants the surprise of their lives in case we—well, in case we come to close quarters."

"Close quarters?"

"Yes, have a fight, you know, or in case they get so fond of us that they won't hear of letting us go—in other words if they make us captives."

"Great Scott, Tom! You don't think they'll do that, do you?"

"No telling, but if they do, Ned, I've got some things in that box that will make them wish they hadn't. It's got——" and Tom leaned forward and whispered, as though he feared even the walls would hear.

"Good!" cried his chum! "That's the stuff! No wonder you thought the ship might be damaged if the fire got to that!"

It seemed that the slight fire was about all the excitement destined to take place aboard the *Calaban,* for, after the blaze was so effectually quenched, the ship slipped along through the calm seas, and it was actually an effort to kill time on the part of the passengers. As they progressed further south the weather became more and more warm, until, as they approached the equator,

every one put on the lightest garments obtainable.

"Crossing the line," was the signal for the usual "stunts" among the sailors. "Neptune" came aboard, with his usual sea-green whiskers made from long rope ends, and with his trident much in evidence; and there was plenty of horse-play which the passengers very much enjoyed.

Then, as the tropical region was left behind, the weather became more bearable. There were one or two storms, but they were of no consequence and the steamer weathered them easily.

Tom and his friends had several talks with the "Reverend Josiah Blinderpool," as the pretended clergyman still called himself. But he did not obtrude his company on them, and though he asked many questions as to where Tom and his party were going, the young inventor, with his usual caution in talking to strangers, rather evaded them.

"Hang it all! He's as close-mouthed as a clam," complained "Mr. Blinderpool" to himself one day, after an attempt to worm something from Tom. "I'll just have to stick close to him and his chum to get a line on where they're heading for. And I must find out, or Waydell will think I'm throwing the game."

As for Tom and the others, they gave the seeming clergyman little thought—that is until

one day when something happened. Ned had been down in the engine room, having had permission to inspect the wonderful machinery, and, on his way back he passed the smoking cabin. He was rather surprised to see Mr. Blinderpool in there, puffing on a big black cigar, and with him were some men whom Ned recognized as personages who had vainly endeavored to get a number of passengers into a card game with them. And, unless Ned's eyes deceived him, the seeming clergyman was about to indulge in a game himself.

"That's mighty queer," mused Ned. "Guess I'll tell Tom about this. I never saw a minister play cards in public before, and this Mr. Blinderpool has been trying to get thick with Tom, of late. Maybe he's a gambler in disguise."

Filled with this thought Ned hastened off to warn his chum.

CHAPTER IX

"FORWARD MARCH!"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the young inventor, when Ned had told him the queer news. "Well, do you know I've been suspicious of that fellow ever since he tried to make friends with us."

"Suspicious? How so? You don't think——"

"Oh, I mean I think he's some kind of a confidence man who has adopted the respectable clothes of a minister to fool people. He may be a card sharper himself. Well, we won't have anything more to do with him. It won't be long before we arrive at Buenos Ayres, and then we won't be bothered with card sharpers or anybody else but——"

"Giants and fighting natives," finished Ned, with a laugh. "You forget, Tom, that there's a war going on near the very place we're headed for."

"That's so, Ned. But with what we have with us I guess we can make out all right. I'm going

to have the electric rifles handy the minute we start for the interior."

The voyage continued, and was fast drawing to a close. "Mr. Blinderpool" made several more attempts to strike up a friendship with Tom, or his chum, but they were on their guard now, and, failing to get into much of a conversation with the two young men, the pretended clergyman turned his attentions to Mr. Damon.

That eccentric gentleman welcomed him at first, until a quiet hint from Tom brought that to an end.

"Bless my fire shovel!" cried Mr. Damon. "You don't say so! Not a clergyman at all? Dear me!"

And then, getting desperate, and needing very much to learn how long a journey his rivals were to undertake, so that he, too, might prepare for it, Mr. Hank Delby, *alias* Blinderpool, began to "pump" Eradicate.

But the latter was too sharp for him. Well knowing that a white man would not get suddenly friendly with one of the black race unless for some selfish object, Eradicate fairly snubbed the seeming minister, until that worthy had to go off by himself, saying bitter things and casting black looks at our friends.

"But I'll get ahead of them yet!" he muttered,

"and I'll get their giants away from them, if they capture any."

The box on which Tom set such an importance, and which had so nearly been the cause of a disaster, had been stored in one of the fire-proof compartments of the ship, and now, as a few days more would see the vessel entering the harbor of the Rio de la Plata, thence to steam up to the ancient city of Buenos Ayres, Tom and the others began to think of what lay before them.

"How do you propose to head into the interior?" asked Mr. Damon one afternoon, when the captain announced that the following morning would see them nearly opposite Montevideo.

"I'm going to hire a lot of burrows, donkeys or whatever they have down here that answers the purpose," replied Tom. "We have a lot of things to transport, and I guess pack mules would be the best, if we can get them. Then I've got to hire some drivers and some porters, camp-makers and the like. In fact we'll have quite a party. I guess I'll need ten natives, and a head man, and with ourselves we'll be fifteen. So we'll need plenty of food. But then we can get that as we go along, except when we get away into the interior, and then we'll have to hunt it ourselves."

"That's the stuff!" cried Ned. "We haven't had a good hunting expedition since we went tc elephant land, Tom. The electric rifles will come in handy here."

"Yes, I expect they will. Now come on, Ned, and help me get a list ready of the things we've got to take with us, and how they can best be divided up."

Thick weather delayed the ship somewhat, so it was not until evening of the next day that they made Montevideo, where part of the cargo was to be discharged. As they would lay over there a day, the boys decided to go ashore, which they did, wondering at the strange sights in the old city.

Tom watched to see if the pretended minister would land, and endeavor to force his acquaintance, but Mr. Hank Delby, to give him his right name, was not in evidence. In fact he was turning over scheme after scheme in his mind in order to hit on one that would enable him to take advantage of the preparations which had been made by his rival in the circus business.

"I've just got to get a line on where those giants are to be found," mused Mr. Delby, in the seclusion of his stateroom, "even if I have to take some other disguise and follow that Swift crowd. That's what I'll do. I'll put on some

other disguise! I wonder what it had better be?"

Tom and Ned, to say nothing of Mr. Damon and Eradicate, found much to interest them in the capital of Uruguay, and they were rather sorry, in a way, when it was time for them to leave.

"But we'll see plenty more strange sights," remarked Tom, as the steamer started off for Buenos Ayres. "In fact our trip hasn't really begun yet."

In due time they dropped anchor at the ancient city, and then began a series of confused and busy times. In fact there was so much to do, seeing to the unloading of their stuff, arranging for hotel accommodations, seeing to hiring natives for the expedition into the interior, and other details, that Tom and his friends had no time to think anything about the pretended clergyman who had caused them a little worry.

Eventually their belongings were stored in a safe place, and our friends sat down to a good dinner in a hotel that, while it was in far-off South America, yet was as good as many in New York, and, in some respects the boys, and Mr. Damon, liked it better.

They found that the Spanish and Portuguese languages were the principal ones spoken, together with a mixture of the native tongues, and as

both Ned and Tom, as well as Mr. Damon, had a working knowledge of Spanish they got along fairly well. Some of the hotel people could speak English.

Tom made inquiries and found that the best plan would be to transport all his stuff by the regular route to Rosario, on the Parana river in Argentina, and there he could make up his pack train, hire native carriers, and start for the interior.

"Then we'll do that," he decided, "and take it easy until we get to Rosario."

It took them the better part of a week to do this, but at last they were on the ground, and felt for the first time that they were really going into a wild and little explored country.

"Are you going to stick to the Parana river?" asked Ned.

"No," replied Tom, in the seclusion of their room, "if there are any giants they will be found in some undiscovered, or at least little traveled, part of the country. I don't believe they are in the vicinity of the big rivers, or other travelers would have heard about them, and, as far as we know, Mr. Preston's animal agent is the only one who ever got a trace of them. We'll have to go into the jungle on either side of the river.

"Bless my walking stick!" cried Mr. Damon. "Have we really to go into the jungle, Tom?"

"I'm afraid we have, if we want to get any giants, and get a trace of Mr. Poddington."

"All right, I'm game, but I do hope we won't run into a band of fighting natives."

In Rosario it was learned that while the "war" was not regarded seriously from the fact that the fighting tribes were far inland, still it was going on with vigor, and large bands of natives were roaming about, stealing each others' cattle and horses, burning villages, and taking captives.

"I guess we're in for it," remarked Tom grimly. "But I'm not going to back out now."

Unexpected complications, difficulties in the way of getting the right kind of help, and a competent man to take charge of the native drivers, so delayed our friends that it was nearly two weeks after their arrival in Rosario before they could start for the interior.

Of course the object of the expedition was kept a secret, and Tom let it be known that he and his friends were merely exploring, and wanted rare plants, orchids, or anything in that line. The natives were not very curious.

At last the day for the start came. The mules, which had been hired as beasts of burdens, were loaded with boxes or bales on either side, the

natives were marshalled into line, Tom, Ned, and Mr. Damon, each equipped with a rifle had a saddle animal to ride, and Eradicate was similarly equipped, though for a weapon he depended on a shotgun, which he said he understood better than the electric rifles.

The aeroplane, divided into many small packages, the goods for barter, their supplies, stores, ammunition, and the box of which Tom took such care—all these were on the backs of the beasts of burden. Some food was taken along, but for a time, at least, they could depend on scattered towns or villages, or the forest game, for their eating.

"Are we all ready?" called Tom, looking at the rather imposing cavalcade of which he was the head."

"I guess so," replied Ned. "Let her go!"

"Bless my liver pad!" gasped Mr. Damon. "If we've got to start do it, and let's get it over with Tom."

"All ready, Rad?" asked the colored man's young master.

"All ready, Massa Tom. But I mus' say dat I'd radder hab Boomerang dan dish yeah animal what I'm ridin'."

"Oh, you'll do all right, Rad. Then, if we're all ready, forward march!" cried Tom, and with

calls to their animals, the drivers started them off.

Hardly had they begun the advance than Ned, who had been narrowly watching one of the natives, hurried up to Tom, and rapidly whispered something to his chum.

"What? cried Tom. "Armed with a six-shooter, is he? Well, we'll see about that! Halt!" he cried in Spanish, and then he called San Pedro the head mule driver, to him.

CHAPTER X

A WILD HORSE STAMPEDE

"WHO is that man?" demanded Tom pointing to the one Ned had indicated. Tom's chum had had a glimpse of a shining revolver in the hip pocket of one of the mule drivers, and knowing that the simple natives were not in the habit of carrying such weapons, the lad had communicated his suspicions to Tom.

"What man, senor?" asked the head mule driver.

"That one!" and the young inventor again pointed toward him. And, now that Tom looked a second time he saw that the man was not as black as the other drivers—not an honest, dark-skinned black but more of a sickly yellow, like a treacherous half-breed. "Who is he?" asked Tom, for the man in question was just then tightening a girth and could not hear him.

"I know not, senor. He come to me when I am hiring the others, and he say he is a good driver. And so he is, I test him before I engage

him," went in San Pedro in Spanish. "He is one good driver."

"Why does he carry a revolver?"

"A revolver, senor? Santa Maria, I know not! I——"

"I'll find out," declared Tom determinedly. "Here," he called to the offending one, who straightened up quickly. "Come here!"

The man came, with all the cringing servility of a born native, and bowed low.

"Why have you a weapon?" asked the young inventor. "I gave orders that none of the drivers were to carry them."

"A revolver, senor? I have none! I——"

"Rad, reach in his pocket!" cried Tom, and the colored man did so with a promptness that the other could not frustrate. Eradicate held aloft a large calibre, automatic weapon.

"What's that for?" asked Tom, virtuously angry.

"I—er—I——" and then, with a hopeless shrug of his shoulders the man turned away.

"Give him his gun, and get another driver, San Pedro," directed our hero, and with another shrug of his shoulders the man accepted the revolver, and walked slowly off. Another driver was not hard to engage, as several had been

hanging about, hoping for employment at the last minute, and one was quickly chosen.

"It's lucky you saw that gun, Ned," remarked Tom, when they were actually under way again.

"Yes, I saw the sun shining on it as his coat flapped up. What was his game, do you suppose?"

"Oh, he might be what they call a 'bad half-breed' down here. I guess maybe he thought he could lord it over the other drivers when we got out in the jungle, and maybe take some of their wages away from them, or have things easier for himself."

"Bless my wishbone!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "You don't think he meant to use it on us, Tom?"

"Why no? What makes you ask that?"

"Oh, I'm just nervous, I guess," replied the odd man.

But if Mr. Damon could have seen that same half-breed a little later, as he slipped into a Rosario resort, with the yellow stain washed from his face, the nervousness of the eccentric gentleman would have increased. For the man who had been detected with the revolver muttered to himself:

"Caught! Well, I'll fool 'em next time all right! I thought I could get away with the pack train, and then it would have been easy to turn

the natives any way I wished, after I had found what I'm looking for. But I had to go and carry that gun! I never thought they'd spot it. Well, it's all up now, and if Waydell heard of it he'd want to fire me. But I'll make good yet. I'll have to adopt some other disguise, and see if I can't tag along behind."

All unconscious of the plotter they had left back of them, Tom and his companions pushed on, rapidly leaving such signs of civilization as were represented by small native towns and villages, and coming nearer to the jungles and forests that lay between them and the place where Tom was destined to be made a captive.

They were far enough away from the tropics to escape the intolerable heat, and yet it was quite warm. In fact the weather was not at all unpleasant, and, once they were started, all enjoyed the novelty of the trip.

Tom planned to keep along the eastern shore of the Parana river, until they reached the junction where the Salado joins it. Then he decided that they would do better to cross the Parana and strike into the big triangle made by that stream and its principal tributary, heading north toward Bolivia.

"For it is in that little-explored part of South America that I think the giants will be found."

said Tom, as he talked it over with Ned and Mr. Damon in the privacy of their tent, which had been set up.

"But why should there be giants there any more than anywhere else?" asked Ned.

"No particular reason," answered his chum. "But, according to the last word Mr. Preston had from his agent, that was where he was heading for, and that's where Zacatas, his native helper, said he lost track of his master. I have a theory that the giants, if we find any, will turn out to be a branch of a Patagonian tribe."

"Patagonians!" exclaimed Ned.

"Yes. You know the natives of the Southern part of Argentina grow to a considerable size. Now Patagonia is a comparatively bleak and cold country. What would prevent some of that big tribe centuries ago, from having migrated to a warmer country, where life was more favorable? After several generations they may have grown to be giants."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "It's a good theory, at any rate, Tom. Though whether you can ever prove it is a question."

"Yes, and a big one," agreed the young inventor with a laugh.

For some days they traveled along over a comparatively flat country, bordering the river.

At times they would pass through small native villages, where they would be able to get fresh meat, poultry and other things that varied their bill of fare. Again there would be long, lonely stretches of forest or jungle, through which it was difficult to make their way. And, occasionally they would come to fair-sized towns where their stay was made pleasant.

"I doan't see any ob dem oranges an' bananas droppin' inter mah mouf, Massa Tom," complained Eradicate one day, after they had been on the march for over a week.

"Have patience, Rad," advised Tom. "We'll come to them when we get a little farther into the interior. First we'll come to the monkeys, and the cocoanut trees."

"Hones' Massa Tom?"

"Surely."

And though it was pretty far south for the nimble simians, the next day they did come upon a drove of them skipping about in the tall palm trees.

"There they are, Rad! There they are!" cried Ned, as the chattering of the monkeys filled the forest.

"By golly! So dey be! Heah's where I get some cocoanuts!"

Before anyone could stop him, Eradicate

caught up a dead branch, and threw it at a monkey. The chattering increased, and almost instantly a shower of cocoanuts came crashing down, narrowly missing some of our friends.

"Hold on, Rad! Hold on!" cried Tom. "Some of us will be hurt!"

Crack! came a cocoanut down on the skull of the colored man.

"Bless my court plaster! Someone's hurt now!" cried Mr. Damon.

"Hurt? Bless yo' heart, Massa Damon, it takes mo' dan dat t' hurt dish yeah chile!" cried Eradicate with a grin. "Ah got a hard head, Ah has, mighty hard head, an' de cocoanut ain't growed dat kin bust it. Thanks, Mistah Monkey, thanks!" and with a laugh Eradicate jumped off his mule, and began gathering up the nuts, while the monkeys fled into the forest.

"Very much good to drink milk," said San Pedro, as he picked up a half-ripe nut, and showed how to chop off the top with a big knife and drain the slightly acid juice inside. "Very much good for thirst."

"Let's try it," Proposed Tom, and they all drank their fill, for there were many cocoanuts, though it was rather an isolated grove of them.

The monkeys became more numerous as they proceeded farther north toward the equator, for

it must be remembered that they had landed south of it, and at times the little animals became a positive nuisance.

Several days passed, and they crossed the Parana river and struck into the almost unpenetrated tract of land where Tom hoped to find the giants. As yet none of their escort dreamed of the object of the expedition, and though Tom had caused scouts to be sent back over their trail to learn if they were being followed there was no trace of any one.

One day, after a night camp on the edge of a rather high table land, they started across a fertile plain that was covered with a rich growth of grass.

"Good grazing ground here," commented Ned.

"Yes," put in San Pedro. "Plenty much horse here pretty soon."

"Do the natives graze their herds of horses here?" asked Tom.

"No natives—wild horses," explained Pedro "Plenty much, sometimes too many they come. You see, maybe."

"It was nearly noon, and Tom was considering stopping for dinner if they could come to a good watering place, when Ned, who had ridden slightly in advance, came galloping back as fast as his steed would carry him.

"Look out! Look out!" he cried. "There's a stampede of 'em, and they're headed right this way!"

"Stampede of what? Who's headed this way?" cried Tom. "A lot of monkeys?"

"No, wild horses! Thousands of 'em! Hear 'em coming?"

In the silence that followed Ned's warning there could be heard a dull, roaring, thundering sound, and the earth seemed to tremble.

"The young senor speaks truth! Wild horses are coming!" cried San Pedro. "Get ready, senors! Have your weapons at hand, and perchance we can turn the stampede aside."

"The rifles! The electric rifles, Ned—Mr. Damon! We've got to stop them, or they'll trample us to death!" cried Tom.

As he spoke the thundering became louder, and then, looking across the grassy plain, all saw a large troop of wild horses, with flying manes and tails, headed directly toward them!

CHAPTER XI

CAUGHT IN A LIVING ROPE

"QUICK! Peg out the mules!" cried San Pedro, after one look at the onrushing horses. "Drive the stakes well down! Tie them fast and then get behind those rocks! Lively!"

He cried his orders to the natives in Spanish, at the same time motioning to Tom and Ned.

"Get off your mules!" he went on. "Peg them out. Peg out the others, and then run for it!"

"Run for it? repeated Tom. "Do you think I'm going to leave my outfit in the midst of that stampede?" and he waved his hand toward the thundering, galloping wild horses which were coming nearer every moment. "Get out the electric rifles, and we'll turn that stampede. I'm not going to run."

"Bless my saddle!" cried Mr. Damon. "This is awful! There must be a thousand of them."

"Nearer two!" cried Ned, who was struggling to loosen the straps that bound his electric rifle to the side of his mule. Already the pack animals

as well as those ridden by the members of the giant-hunting party were showing signs of excitement. They seemed to want to join the stampeding horses.

"Peg our animals out! Peg them out! Make them so they can't join the others!" yelled San-Pedro. "It's our only chance!"

"I believe he's right!" cried Mr. Damon. "Tom, if we wait until those maddened brutes are up to us they'll fairly sweep ours along with them, and there's no telling where we'll end up. I think we'd better follow his advice and tie our mules as strongly as we can. Then we can go over there by the rocks, and fire at the wild horses. We may be able to turn them aside."

"Guess that's right," agreed the young inventor after a moment's thought. "Come on, Ned. Peg out!"

"Peg out! Peg out!" yelled the natives, and then began a lively scene. Pegging stakes were in readiness, and, attached to the bridle of each mule was a strong, rawhide rope for tying to the stake. The pegs were driven deeply into the ground and in a trice the animals were made fast to them, though they snorted, and tried to pull away as they heard the neighing of the stampeding animals and saw them coming on with an irresistible rush.

"Hurry!" begged San Pedro, and hurry Tom, Ned and the others did. Animal after animal was made fast—that is all but one and that bore on its back two rather large but light boxes—the contents of the case which Tom had rescued from the fire in the hold.

"What are you going to do with mule?" asked Ned, as he saw Tom begin to lead the animal away, the others having been pegged out.

"I'm going to take him over to the rocks with me. I'm not going to take any chances on this mule getting away with those things in the boxes. Give me a hand here, and then we'll see what the electric rifles will do against those horses."

But the one mule which Tom had elected to take with him seemed to resent being separated from his companions. Bracing his feet well apart, the animal stubbornly refused to move.

"Come on!" yelled Tom, pulling on the leading rope.

"Bless my porous plaster!" cried Mr. Damon. "You'd better hurry, Tom! Those wild horses are almost on us!"

"I'm trying to hurry!" replied the young inventor, "but this mule won't come. Ned, get behind and shove, will you?"

"Not much! I don't want to be kicked."

"Beat him! Strike him! Wait until I get a

club!" yelled San Pedro. "Come, Antonia, Selka, Balaka!" he cried, to several of the natives who had already started for the sheltering rocks a short distance away. "Beat the mule for Senor Swift!"

Ned joined Tom at the leading rope, and the two lads tried to pull the animal along. Mr. Damon rushed over to lend his aid, and San Pedro, catching up a long stick, was about to bring it down on the mule's back. Meanwhile the stampeding animals were rushing nearer.

"Hold on dere, Massa Tom!" suddenly called Eradicate. "Yo'-all done flustered dat mule, dat's what yo' done. Yo'-all am too much excited 'bout him. Be calm! Be calm!"

"Calm! With that bunch of wild animals bearing down on us?" shouted Tom. "Let's see you be calm, Rad. Come on here, you obstinate brute!" he cried, straining on the rope.

"Let me do it, Massa Tom. Let me do it." suggested the colored man hurrying to the balky beast.

Then, as gently as if he was talking to a nervous child, and totally oblivious to the danger of the approaching horses, Eradicate went up to the mule's head, rubbed its ears until they pointed naturally once more, murmured something to it, and then, taking the rope from Ned and Tom,

Eradicate led the mule along toward the rocks as easily as if there had never been any question about going there.

"For the love of tripe! How did you do it?" asked Tom.

"Bless my peck of oats!" gasped Mr. Damon. "It's a good thing we had Rad along!"

"All mules am alike," said the colored man with a grin. "An dish yeah one ain't much different from mah Boomerang. I guess he's a sorter cousin."

"Come on!" yelled San Pedro. "No time to lose. Make for the rocks!"

Tom, Ned and Mr. Damon sprinted then, and there was need to, for the foremost of the galloping horses was not a hundred feet away. Then came Eradicate, leading the mule that had at last consented to hurry. The natives, with San Pedro, were already at the rocks, waiting for the white hunters with the deadly electric rifles.

"If they stampede our mules we'll be in a pickle!" murmured Ned.

"I guess those ropes will hold unless they bite them through," remarked Tom.

"Yes, they sure hold," cried San Pedro, and indeed one had to shout now to be heard above the thundering of the horses. Now the tethered

mules were lost to sight in the mulitude of the other steeds all about them.

"Come on, Ned!" yelled Tom, as he sighted his rifle. "Pump it into them! We must turn them, or they may come over this way, and if they do it will be all up with us."

"Shoot to kill?" asked Ned, as he drew back the firing lever of his electric rifle.

"No, only a stunning charge. Those horses are valuable, and there's no use killing them. All we want to do is to turn them aside."

"That's right," agreed Mr. Damon, forgetting in the excitement of the moment to bless himself or anything. "We'll only stun them."

The rifles were quickly adjusted to send out a comparatively weak charge of electricity, and then they were trained on the dense mass of horses, while the three marksmen began working the firing levers.

At first, though horse after horse fell to the ground, stunned, there was no appreciable effect on the thousands in the drove. The poor mules were hidden from sight, though by reason of divisions in the living stream of animals it could still be told where they were tethered, and where the horses separated to go past them. Fortunately the ropes and pegs held.

"Fire faster!" cried Tom. "Shoot across the

front of them, and try to turn them to one side."

From the rocks, behind which the natives and our friends crouched, there came a steady stream of electric fire. Horse after horse went down, stunned but not badly hurt, and in a few hours the beasts would feel no ill effects. The firing was redoubled, and then there came a break in the steady stream of horseflesh.

Some hesitated and sought to turn back. Others, behind, pressed them on, and then, as if in fear at the unknown and unseen power that was laying low animal after animal, the great body, of horses, suddenly turned at right angles to their course and broke away. There were now two bodies of the wild runaways, those that had passed the tethered mules, and those that had swung off. The stampede had been broken.

"That's the stuff!" cried Tom, jumping up from behind the rocks, and swinging his hat. "We've turned them."

"And just in time, too," added Ned, as he joined his chum. Then all the others leaped up, and the sight of the human beings completed the scare. The stampeding animals swung off more than before, so that they were nearly doubling back on their own trail. The others thundered off, and the ground was strewn with unconscious though unharmed animals.

"One mule gone!" cried San Pedro, hastily counting the still tethered animals which were wildly tugging at their ropes.

"Never mind," spoke Tom, "it's the one with some of that damaged bartering stuff I intended for trading. We can afford to lose that. Rad, is your animal all right?"

"He suah am, Massa Tom. Dish yeah mule am almost as sensible as Boomerang, ain't yo'?" and Eradicate patted the big animal he was leading.

"I'll send a man down the trail, and maybe he can pick up the missing one," said San Pedro, and while the other natives were quieting the restless mules, one tall black man hastened in the wake of the retreating horses.

He came back in an hour with the missing animal, that had broken its tether rope and then, after running along with the wild horses had evidently dropped out of the drove. Aside from the loss of a small box, there had been no damage done, and the cavalcade was soon under way once more, leaving the motionless horses to recover from the effects of the electricity.

"Bless my saddle pad!" cried Mr. Damon. "I don't think I want to go through anything like that again."

"Neither do I," agreed Tom. "We are well out of it."

"How much you take for one of them rifles?" asked San Pedro admiringly.

"Not for sale," answered Tom with a laugh.

They camped in a fertile valley that night, and had a much-needed rest. As yet Tom had made no inquiries as to the location of giant land from any of the natives of the villages or towns through which they passed. He knew as soon as he did begin asking questions, his own men would hear of it, and they might be frightened if they knew they were in an expedition the object of which was to capture some of the tall men.

"We'll just go along for a few days more," said Tom, to Ned, "and then, when I do spring my surprise, they'll be so far from home that they won't dare turn back. In a few days I'll begin making inquiries."

They traveled on for three days more, ever heading north, and coming more into the warmer climate. The vegetation began to take on a more tropical look, and finally they reached a region infested with many wild beasts and monkeys, and with patches of dense jungle on either side of the narrow trail. Fruits, tropical flowers and birds abounded.

"I think we're getting there," remarked Tom,

on the evening of the third day after his talk with Ned. "San Pedro says there's quite a village about half a day's march ahead, and I may learn something there. I'll know by to-morrow whether we are on the right trail or not."

The natives were getting supper, and Eradicate was busy with a meal for the three white hunters. Mr. Damon had strolled down to the bank of a little stream, and was looking at some small animals like foxes that had come for their evening drink. They seemed quite fearless.

Suddenly something long, round and thick seemed to drop down out of a tree close to the odd gentleman. So swift and noiseless was it that Mr. Damon never noticed it. Then, like a flash something went around him, and he let out a scream of terror.

San Pedro, who was nearest to him, saw and heard. The next instant the black muleteer came rushing toward the camp, crying:

"He is caught in a rope! Mr. Damon is caught in a rope!"

"A rope!" repeated Ned, not understanding.

"Yes, a rope in a tree. Come quickly!"

Tom caught up one of the electric rifles and rushed forward. No sooner had he set eyes on his friend, who was writhing about in the folds

of what looked like a big ship cable, then the young inventor cried:

"A rope! Yes, a living rope! That's a big boa constrictor that has Mr. Damon! Get a gun, Ned, and follow me! We must save him before he is crushed to death!"

And the two lads rushed forward while the living rope drew its folds tighter and tighter about the unfortunate man.

CHAPTER XII

A NATIVE BATTLE

"Bless my——!" but that was as far as poor Mr. Damon could get. The breath was fairly squeezed out of him by the folds of the great serpent that had dropped down out of the tree to crush him to death. His head fell forward on his breast, and his arms were pinioned to his sides.

"Quick, Ned!" cried Tom. "We must fire together! Be careful not to hit Mr. Damon!"

"That's right. I'll take the snake on one side, Tom, and you on the other!"

"No! Then we might hit each other. Come on my side. Aim for the head, and throw in the highest charge. We want to kill, not stun!"

"Right!" gasped Ned, as he ran forward at his chum's side.

San Pedro, and the other natives, could do nothing. In the gathering twilight, broken by the light of several campfires, they stood helpless watching the two plucky youths advance to do

battle with the serpent. Eradicate had caught up a club, and had dashed forward to do what he could, but Tom motioned him back.

"We can manage," spoke the young inventor.

Then he and Ned crept on with ready rifles. The snake raised its ugly head and hissed, ceasing for a moment to constrict its coils about the unfortunate man.

"Now's our chance—fire!" hoarsely whispered Ned.

It seemed as if the big snake heard, for, raising its head still higher, it fairly glared at Ned and Tom. It was the very chance they wanted, for they could now fire without the danger of hitting Mr. Damon.

"Ready?" asked Tom of his chum in a low voice.

"Ready!" was the equally low answer.

It was necesary to kill the serpent at one shot, as to merely wound it might mean that in its agony it would thresh about, and seriously injure, if not kill, Mr. Damon.

"Fire!" called Tom in a whisper, and he and Ned pressed the triggers of the electric rifles on the same instant.

There was a streak of bluish flame that cut like a sliver through the gathering darkness, and then, as though a blight had fallen upon it, the

folds of the great snake relaxed, and Mr. Damon slipped to the ground unconscious. The electric charges had gone fairly through the head of the serpent and it had died instantly.

"Quick! Mr. Damon! We must get him away!" cried Tom. "He may be dead!"

Together the chums sprang forward. The folds of the serpent had scarcely ceased moving before the two youths snatched their friend away. Dropping their rifles, they lifted him up to bear him to the sleeping tent which had been erected.

"Liver pin!" suddenly ejaculated Mr. Damon. It was what he started to say when the serpent had squeezed the breath out of him, and, on regaining consciousness from his momentary faint, his brain carried out the suggestion it had originally received.

"How are you?" cried Tom, nearly dropping Mr. Damon's legs in his excitement, for he had hold of his feet, while Ned was at the head.

"Are you all right?" gasped Ned.

"Yes—I—I guess so. I—I feel as though I had been put through a clothes wringer though. What happened?"

"A big snake dropped down out of a tree and grabbed you," answered Tom.

"And then what? Put me down, boys, I guess I can walk."

"We shot it," said Ned modestly.

"Bless my insurance policy!" exclaimed the odd gentleman. "I—I hardly know what to say. I'll say it later. You saved my life. Let me see if any bones are broken."

None was, fortunately, and after staggering about a bit Mr. Damon found that he could limp along. But he was very sore and bruised, for, though the snake had squeezed him but for part of a minute, that was long enough. A few seconds more and nearly every bone in his body would have been crushed, for that is the manner in which a constrictor snake kills its prey before devouring it.

"Santa Maria! The dear gentleman is not dead then?" cried San Pedro, as the three approached the tents.

"Bless my name plate, no!" exclaimed Mr. Damon.

"Praise to all the saints! The brave young senors with their wonderful guns saved him. Now you must rest and sleep."

"I feel as if that was all I wanted to do for a month," commented Mr. Damon. His soreness and stiffness increased each minute, and he was glad to get to bed, while the boys and Eradicate rubbed his limbs with liniment. San Pedro knew of a leaf that grew in the jungle which, when

bruised, and made into poultices, had the property of drawing out soreness. The next day he found some, and Mr. Damon was wrapped up in bandages until he declared that he looked like an Egyptian mummy.

But the leaf poultices did him good, and in a few days he was able to be about, though he was still a trifle stiff. Of course the cavalcade had to halt in the woods, but they did not mind this as they had traveled well up to this time, and the enforced rest was appreciated.

"Well, do you feel able to move along?" asked Tom of Mr. Damon one morning, about a week later, for they were still in the "snake camp," as they called it in memory of the big serpent.

"Oh, yes, I think so, Tom. Where are you going?"

"I want to push on to the next village. There I hope to get some line on giant land, and really I ought to begin making inquiries soon. San Pedro and the others are wondering what our object is, for we haven't collected any specimens of either flowers or animals, or the snake skin, and he thinks we are a sort of scientific expedition."

"Well, let's travel then. I'm able."

So they started off once more along the jungle and forest trail. As San Pedro had predicted,

they came upon evidences of a native village. Scattered huts, made of plastered mud and grass, with thatched roofs of palm leaves, were met with, as they advanced, but none of the places seemed to be inhabited, though rude gardens around them showed that they had been the homes of natives up to recently.

"No one seems to be at home," remarked Tom, when they had gone past perhaps half a dozen of these lonely huts.

"I wonder what can be the matter?" asked Ned. "It looks as if they had gone off in a hurry, too. Maybe there's been some sort of epidemic."

"No, no sickness," said San Pedro. "Natives no sick."

"Bless my liver pill!" cried Mr. Damon, who was almost himself again. "Then what is it?"

"Much fight, maybe."

"Much fight?" repeated Tom.

"Yes, tribes at war. Maybe natives go away so as not be killed."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the young inventor. "That's so. I forgot about what Mr. Preston said. There's a native war going on around here. Well, when we get to the town we can find out more about it, and steer clear of the two armies, if we have to."

But as they went farther on, the evidences of a native war became more pronounced. They passed several huts that had been burned, and the native mule drivers began showing signs of fear.

"I don't like this," murmured Tom to his chum. "It looks bad."

"What can you do?"

"Nothing, I guess. We've got to keep on. No use turning back now. Maybe the two rival forces have annihilated each other, and there aren't any fighters left."

At that moment there arose a cry from some of the natives who, with the mules and their burdens, had pressed on ahead.

"What's that?" exclaimed Tom.

"Something's happened!" gasped Ned.

"Bless my cartridge box!" cried Mr. Damon.

The three went forward and came to a little hill. They looked down into a valley—a valley that had sheltered a native village, but the village was no more. It was but a heap of blackened and fire-scarred ruins, and there were still clouds of smoke arising from the grass huts, showing that the enemy had but recently made their assault on the place.

"Bless my heart!" cried Mr. Damon "The whole place has been wiped out."

"Not one hut left," added Ned.

"Hark!" cried Tom.

An instant later there arose, off in the woods, a chorus of wild yells. It was followed by the weird sound of tom-toms and the gourd and skin drums of the natives. The shouting noise increased, and the sound of the war drums also.

"Look!" cried Mr. Damon, pointing to a distant hill, and there the boys boys saw two large bodies of natives rushing toward one another, brandishing spears, clubs and the deadly blow guns.

They were not more than half a mile away, and in plain view of Tom and his party, though the two forces had not yet seen our friends.

"They're going to fight!" cried Tom.

And the next moment the two bodies of natives came together in a mass, the enemies hurling themselves at each other with the eagerness and ferocity of wild beasts. It was a deadly battle.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DESERTION

"Say, look at those fellows pitch into one another!" gasped Ned.

"It's fighting at close range all right," commented Mr. Damon.

"If they had rifles they wouldn't be at it hand to hand," spoke Tom. "Maybe it's just as well they haven't, for there won't be so many killed, But say, we'd better be thinking of ourselves. They may make up their quarrel and turn against us any minute.

"No—never—no danger of them being friends—they are rival tribes," said San Pedro. "But either one may attack us—the one that is the victor. It is better that we keep away."

"I guess you're right," agreed Tom. "Lead the way, San Pedro, and we'll get out of sight."

But there was a fascination in watching the distant battle that was hard to resist. It was like looking at a moving picture, for at that distance none of the horrors of war were visible. True,

natives went down by scores, and it was not to be doubted but what they were killed or injured, but it seemed more like a big football scrimmage than a fight.

"This is great!" cried Tom. "I like to watch it, but I'm sorry for the poor chaps that get hurt or killed. I hope they're only stunned as we stunned the wild horses."

"I'm afraid it is more serious than that," spoke San Pedro. "These natives are very bloodthirsty. It would not be well for us to incur their anger."

"We won't run any chances," decided Tom. "We'll just travel on. Come on, Ned—Mr. Damon."

As he spoke there was a sudden victorious shout from the scene of the battle. One body of natives was seen to turn and flee, while the others pursued them.

"Now's our time to make tracks!" called Tom. "We'll have to push on to the next village before we can ask where the gi——" he caught himself just in time, for San Pedro was looking curiously at him.

"The senor wishes to find something?" asked the head mule driver with an insinuating smile.

"Yes," broke in Eradicate. "We all is lookin' fo' some monstrous giant orchards flowers."

"Ah, yes, orchids," spoke San Pedro. "Well,

there may be some in the jungle ahead of us, but the senors have come the wrong trail for flowers," and he looked curiously at Tom, while, from afar, come the sound of the native battle though the combatants could no longer be seen.

"Never mind," said our hero quickly. "I guess I'll find what I want. Now come on."

They started off, skirting the burned village to get on the trail beyond it. But hardly had they made a detour of the burned huts than one of the native drivers, who was in the rear, came riding up with a shout.

"Now what's the matter?" cried Tom, looking back.

There was a voluble chattering in Spanish between the driver and San Pedro.

"He says the natives that lived in this village have driven their enemies away, and are coming back—after us," translated the head mule driver.

"After us!" gasped Ned.

"Yes," replied San Pedro simply. "They are coming even now. They will fight too, for all their wild nature is aroused."

It needed but a moment's listening to prove this. From the rear came wild yells and the beating of drums and tom-toms.

"Bless my fountain pen!" cried Mr. Damon. "What are we going to do?"

"Stop them if we can," answered Tom coolly. "Ned, you and I and Mr. Damon will form a rear guard. San Pedro, take the mules and the men, and make as good time as you can in advance. We'll take three of the fastest mules, and hold these fellows back with the electric rifles, and when we've done that we'll ride on and catch up to you."

"Very good," said San Pedro, who seemed relieved to know that he did not have to do any of the fighting.

Three of the lighter weight mules, who carried small burdens, were quickly relieved of them, and mounting these steeds in preference to the ones they had been riding since they took the trail, Tom, Ned and Mr. Damon dropped back to try and hold off the enemy.

They had not far to ride nor long to wait. They could hear the fierce yells of the victorious tribesmen as they came back to their ruined village, and though there were doubtless sad hearts among them, they rejoiced that they had defeated their enemies. They knew they could soon rebuild the simple grass huts.

"Small charges, just to stun them!" ordered Tom, and the electric rifles were so adjusted.

"Here's a good place to meet them," suggested Ned, as they came to a narrow turn in the trail.

"They can't come against us but a few at a time, and we can pump them full of electricity from here."

"The very thing!" cried Tom, as he dismounted, an example followed by the others. Then, in another moment, they saw the blacks rushing toward them. They were clad in nondescript garments, evidently of their own make, and they carried clubs, spears, bows and arrows and blow guns. There was not a firearm among them, as they passed on after the party of our friends whom they had seen from the battle-hill. They gave wild yells as they saw the young inventor's friends.

"Let 'em have it!" called Tom in a low voice, and the electric rifles sent out their stunning charges. Several natives in the front rank dropped, and there was a cry of fear and wonder from the others. Then, after a moment's hesitation they pressed on again.

"Once more!" cried Tom.

Again the electric rifles spoke, and half a score went down unconscious, but not seriously hurt. In a few hours they would be as well as ever, such was the merciful charge that Tom Swift and the others used in the rifles.

The third time they fired, and this was too much for the natives. They could not battle

against an unseen and silent enemy who mowed them down like a field of grain. With wild yells they fled back along the trail they had come.

"I guess that does it!" cried Tom. "We'd better join the others now."

Mounting their mules, they galloped back to where San Pedro and his natives were pressing forward.

"Did you have the honor of defeating them?" the head mule driver asked.

"I had the *honor*," answered Tom, with a grim smile.

Then they pressed on, but there was no more danger. That night they camped in a peaceful valley and were not disturbed, and the following day they put a good many miles behind them. On the advice of San Pedro, they avoided the next two villages as they realized that they were in the war zone, and then they headed for a large town where Tom was sure he would hear some news of the giants.

They had to camp twice at night before reaching this town, and when they did get to it they were warmly welcomed, for white explorers had been there years before, and had treated the natives well. Tom distributed many trinkets among the head men and won their good will so that the

party was given comfortable huts in which to sleep, and a plentiful supply of provisions.

"Can you arrange for a talk with the chief?" asked Tom of San Pedro that night. "I want to ask him about certain things."

"About where you can find giant flowers?" asked the mule driver with a quick look.

"Yes—er—and other giant things," replied Tom.

"I fix," answered San Pedro shortly, but there was a queer look on his face.

A few hours later Tom was summoned to the hut of the chief of the town, and thither he went with Ned, Mr. Damon and San Pedro as interpreter, for the natives spoke a jargon of their own that Tom could not understand.

There were some simple ceremonies to observe, and then Tom found himself facing the chief, with San Pedro by his side. After the greetings, and an exchange of presents, Tom giving him a cheap phonograph with which the chief was wildly delighted, there came the time to talk.

"Ask him where the giant men live?" our hero directed San Pedro, believing that the time had now come to disclose the object of his expedition.

"Giant men, Senor Swift? I thought it was giant plants — orchids — you were after," exclaimed San Pedro.

"Well, I'll take a few giant men if I can find them. Tell him I understand there is a tribe of giants in this country. Ask him if he ever heard of them."

San Pedro hesitated. He looked at Tom, and the young inventor fancied that there was a tinge of white on the swarthy face of the chief mule driver. But San Pedro translated the question.

It's effect on the chief was strange. He half leaped from his seat, and stared at Tom. Then he uttered a cry—a cry of fear—and spoke rapidly.

"What does he say?" asked Tom of San Pedro eagerly, when the chief had ceased speaking.

"He say—he say," began the mule driver and the words seemed to stick in his throat—"he say there *are* giants—many miles to the north. Terrible big men—very cruel—and they are fearful. Once they came here and took some of his people away. He is afraid of them. We are *all* afraid of them," and San Pedro looked around apprehensively, as though he might see one of the giants stalking into the chief's hut at any moment.

"Ask him how many miles north?" asked Tom, hardly able to conceal his delight. The giants had no terrors for him.

"Two weeks' journey," translated San Pedro.

"Good!" cried the young inventor. "Then we'll keep right on. Hurrah! I'm on the right track at last, and I'll have a giant for the circus and we may be able to rescue Mr. Poddington!"

"Is the senor in earnest?" asked San Pedro, looking at Tom curiously. "Is he really going among these terrible giants?"

"Yes, but I don't believe they'll be so terrible. They may be very gentle. I'm sure they'll be glad to come with me and join a circus—some of them—and earn a hundred dollars a week. Of course we're going on to giant land!"

"Very good," said San Pedro quietly, and then he followed Tom out of the chief's hut.

"It's all right, Ned old sport, we'll get to giant land after all!" cried Tom to his chum as they reached the hut where they were quartered.

The next morning when Tom got up, and looked for San Pedro and his men, to give orders about the march that day, the mule drivers were nowhere to be seen. Nor were the mules in the places where they had been tethered. Their packs lay in a well ordered heap, but the animals and their drivers were gone.

"This is queer," said Tom, rubbing his eyes to make sure that he saw aright. "I wonder where they are? Rad, look around for them."

The colored man did so, and came back soon,

to report that San Pedro and his men had gone in the night. Some of the native villagers told him so by signs, Eradicate said. They had stolen away.

"Gone!" gasped Tom. "Gone where?"

"Bless my railroad ticket!" cried Mr. Damon.

"We're deserted," exclaimed Ned. "They've taken the mules, and left us."

"I guess that's it," admitted Tom ruefully, after a minute's thought. "San Pedro couldn't stand for the giants. He's had a frightful flunk. Well, we're all alone, but we'll go on to giant land anyhow! We can get more mules. A little thing like this can't phase me. Are you with me, Ned—Mr. Damon—Eradicate?"

"Of course we are!" they cried without a moment's hesitation.

"Then we'll go to giant land alone!" exclaimed Tom. "Come on, now, and we'll see if we can arrange for some pack animals."

CHAPTER XIV

IN GIANT LAND

WHEN it first became sure that San Pedro and the other natives had deserted—fled in the night, for fear of the giants—there was a reactionary feeling of despondency and gloom among Tom and his three friends. But the boldness and energy of the young inventor, his vigorous words, his determination to proceed at any cost to the unknown land that lay before them—these served as a tonic, and after a few moments, Ned, Mr. Damon, and even Eradicate looked at things with brighter spirits.

"Do you really mean it, Tom?" asked Ned. "Will you go on to giant land?"

"I surely will, if we can find it. Why, we found the city of gold all alone, you and Mr. Damon and I, and I don't see why we can't find this land, especially when all we have to do is to march forward."

"But look at the lot of stuff we have to carry!"

went on Ned, waving his hand toward the heap of packs that the mule drivers had left behind.

"Bless my baggage check, yes!" added Mr. Damon. "We can never do it, Tom. We had better leave it here, and try to get back to civilization."

"Never!" cried Tom. "I started off after a giant, and I'm going to get one, if I can induce one of the big men to come back with me. I'm not going to give up when we're so close. We can get more pack animals, I'm sure. I'm going to have a try for it. If I can't speak the language of these natives I can make signs. Come on, Ned, we'll pay a morning visit to the chief."

"I'll come along," added Mr. Damon.

"That's right," replied the young inventor. "Rad, you go stand guard over our stuff. Some of the natives might not be able to withstand temptation. Don't let them touch anything."

"Dat's what I won't, Massa Tom. Good land a massy! ef I sees any ob 'em lay a finger on a pack I'll shoot off my shotgun close to der ears, so I will. Oh, ef I only had Boomerang here, he could carry mos' all ob dis stuff his own se'f."

"You've got a great idea of Boomerang's strength," remarked Tom with a laugh, as he and Ned and Mr. Damon started for the big hut where the chief lived.

"Do you really think San Pedro and the others left because they were afraid of the giants we might meet?" asked Ned.

"I think so," answered his chum.

"Bless my toothpick!" gasped Mr. Damon. "In that case maybe we'd better be on the lookout ourselves."

"Time enough to worry when we get there," answered the young inventor. "From what the circus man said the giants are not particularly cruel. Of course Mr. Preston didn't have much information to go on, but—well, we'll have to wait—that's all. But I'm sure San Pedro and the others were in a blue funk and vamoosed on that account."

"Hey, Massa Tom!" suddenly called Eradicate. "Heah am a letter I found on de baggage," and he ran forward with a missive, rudely scrawled on a scrap of paper.

"It's from San Pedro," remarked Tom after a glance at it, "and it bears out what I said. He writes that he and his men never suspected that we were going after the giants, or they would never have come with us. He says they are very sorry to leave us, as we treated them well, but are afraid to go on. He adds that they have taken enough of our bartering goods to make up

their wages, and enough food to carry them to the next village.

"Well," finished Tom, as he folded the paper, "I suppose we can't kick, and, maybe after all, it will be for the best. Now to see if the chief can let us have some mules."

It took some time, by means of signs, to make the chief understand what had happened, but, when Tom had presented him with a little toy that ran by a spring, and opened up a pack of trading goods, which he indicated would be exchanged for mules, or other beasts of burden, the chief grinned in a friendly fashion, and issued certain orders.

Several of his men hurried from the big hut, and a little later, when Tom was showing the chief how to run the toy, there was a sound of confusion outside.

"Bless my battle axe!" cried Mr. Damon. "I hope that's not another war going on."

"It's our new mules!" cried Ned, taking a look. "And some cows and a bony horse or two, Tom. We've drawn a rich lot of pack animals!"

Indeed there was a nondescript collection of beasts of burden. There were one or two good mules, several sorry looking horses, and a number of sleepy-eyed steers. But there were enough of

them to carry all the boxes and bales that contained the outfit of our friends.

"It might be worse," commented Tom. "Now if they'll help us pack up we'll travel on."

More sign language was resorted to, and the chief, after another present had been made to him, sent some of his men to help put the packs on the animals. The steers, which Tom did not regard with much favor, proved to be better than the mules, and by noon our friends were all packed up again, and ready to take the trail. The chief gave them a good dinner,—as native dinners go,—and then, after telling them that, though he had never seen the giants it had long been known that they inhabitated the country to the north, he waved a friendly good-bye.

"Well, we'll see what luck we'll have by ourselves," remarked Tom, as he mounted a bony mule, an example followed by Ned, Mr. Damon and Eradicate. They had left behind some of their goods, and so did not have so much to carry. Food they had in condensed form and they were getting into the more tropical part of the country where game abounded.

It was not as easy as they had imagined it would be for, with only four to drive so many animals, several of the beasts were continually straying from the trail, and once a big steer,

with part of the aeroplane on its back, wandered into a morass and they had to labor hard to get the animal out.

"Well, this is fierce!" exclaimed Tom, at the end of the first day when, tired and weary, bitten by insects, and torn by jungle briars, they made camp that night.

"Going to give up?" asked Ned.

"Not much!"

They felt better after supper, and, tethering the animals securely, they stretched out in their tents, with mosquito canopies over them to keep away the pestering insects.

"I've got a new scheme," announced Tom next morning at breakfast.

"What is it? Going on the rest of the way in the aeroplane?" asked Ned hopefully.

"No, though I believe if I had brought the big airship along I could have used it. But I mean about driving the animals. I'm going to make a long line of them, tying one to the other like the elephants in the circus when they march around, holding each other's tails. Then one of us will ride in front, another in the rear, and one on each side. In that way we'll keep them going and they won't stray off.

"Bless my button hook!" cried Mr. Damon. "That's a good idea, Tom!" It was carried out

with much success, and thereafter they traveled better.

But even at the best it was not easy work, and more than once Tom's friends urged him to turn back. But he would not, ever pressing on, with the strange land for his goal. They had long since passed the last of the native villages, and they had to depend on their own efforts for food. Fortunately they did not have any lack of game, and they fared well with what they had with them in the packs.

Occasionally they met little bands of native hunters, and, though usually these men fled at the sight of our friends, yet once they managed to make signs to one, who, informed them as best he could, that giant land was still far ahead of them.

Twice they heard distant sounds of native battles and the weird noise of the wooden drums and the tom-toms. Once, as they climbed up a big hill, they looked down into a valley and saw a great conflict in which there must have been several thousand natives on either side. It was a fierce battle, seen even from afar, and Tom and the others shuddered as they slipped down over the other side of the rise, and out of sight.

"We'd better steer clear of them," was Tom's opinion; and the others agreed with him.

For another week they kept on, the way becoming more and more difficult, and the country more and more wild. They had fairly to cut their way through the jungle at times, and the only paths were animal trails, but they were better than nothing. For the last five days they had not seen a human being, and the loneliness was telling on them.

"I'd be glad to see even a two-headed giant," remarked Tom whimsically one night as they made their camp.

"Yes, and I'd be glad to hear someone talk, even in the sign language," added Ned, with a grin.

They slept well, for they were very tired, and Tom, who shared his tent with Ned, was awakened rather early the next morning by hearing someone moving outside the canvas shelter.

"Is that you, Mr. Damon?" he asked, the odd gentleman having a tent adjoining that of the boys.

There was no answer.

"Rad, are you getting breakfast?" asked the young inventor. "What time is it?"

Still no answer.

"What's the matter?" asked Ned, who had been awakened by Tom's inquiries.

Before our hero had a chance to reply the flap

of his tent was pulled back, and a head was thrust in. But such a head! It was enormous! A head covered with a thick growth of tawny hair, and a face almost hidden in a big tawny, bushy beard. Then an arm was thrust in—an arm that terminated in a brawny fist that clasped a great club. There was no mistaking the object that gazed in on the two youths. It was a gigantic man—a man almost twice the size of any Tom had ever seen. And then our hero knew that he had reached the end of his quest.

"A giant!" gasped Tom. "Ned! Ned, we're in the big men's country, and we didn't know it!"

"I—I guess you're right, Tom!"

The giant started at the sounds of their voices, and then his face breaking into a broad grin, that showed a great mouth filled with white teeth, he called to them in an unknown tongue and in a voice that seemed to fairly shake the frail tent.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE "PALACE" OF THE KING

For a few moments after their first ejaculations neither Tom nor Ned knew what to do. The giant continued to gaze at them, with the same good-natured grin on his face. Possibly he was amused at the small size of the persons in the tent. Then Tom spoke.

"He doesn't look as if he would bite, Ned."

"No, he seems harmless enough. Let's get up, and see what happens. I wonder if there are any more of them? They must have come out on an early hunt, and stumbled upon our camp."

At this moment there arose a cry from Mr. Damon's tent.

"Bless my burglar alarm!" shouted the odd gentleman. "Tom — Ned — am I dreaming? There's a man here as big as a mountain. Tom! Ned!"

"It's all right, Mr. Damon!" called Tom. "We're among the giants all right. They won't hurt you."

"Fo' de good land ob massy!" screamed Erad-

icate, a second later, and then they knew that he, too, had seen one of the big men. "Fo' de lub ob pork chops! Am dis de Angel Gabriel? Listen to de blowin' ob de trump! Oh, please good Massa Angel Gabriel, I ain't nebber done nuffin! I's jest po' ol' Eradicate Sampson, an' I got a mule Boomerang, and' dat's all I got. Please good Mr. Angel—— "

"Dry up, Rad!" yelled Tom. "It's only one of the giants. Come on out of your tent and get breakfast. We're on the borders of giant land, evidently, and they seem as harmless as ordinary men. Get up, everybody."

As Tom spoke he rose from the rubber blanket on which he slept. Ned did the same, and the giant slowly pulled his head out from the tent. Then the two youths went outside. A strange sight met their gaze.

There were about ten natives standing in the camp—veritable giants, big men in every way. The young inventor had once seen a giant in a circus, and, allowing for shoes with very thick soles which the big man wore, his height was a little over seven feet. But these South American giants seemed more than a foot higher than that, none of those who had stumbled upon the camp being less than eight feet.

"And I believe there must be bigger ones in

their land, wherever that is," said Tom. Nor were these giants tall and thin, as was the one Tom had seen, but stout, and well proportioned. They were savages, that was evident, but the curious part of it was that they were almost white, and looked much like the pictures of the old Norsemen.

But, best of all, they seemed good-natured, for they were continually laughing or smiling, and though they looked with wonder on the pile of boxes and bales, and on the four travelers, they seemed more bewildered and amused, than vindictive that their country should have been invaded. Evidently the fears of the natives who had told Tom about the giants had been unfounded.

By this time Mr. Damon and Eradicate had come from their tents, and were gazing with startled eyes at the giants who surrounded them.

"Bless my walking stick!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "Is it possible?"

"Yes, we've arrived!" cried Tom. "Now to see what happens. I wonder if they'll take us to their village, and I wonder if I can get one of these giants for Mr. Preston's circus?"

"You certainly can't unless he wants to come," declared Ned. "You'd have a hard tussle trying to carry one of these fellows away against his will, Tom."

"I sure would. I'll have to make inducements. Well, I wonder what is best to do?"

The giant who had looked in the tent of Ned and Tom, and who appeared to be the leader of the party, now spoke in his big, booming voice. He seemed to be asking Tom a question, but the young inventor could not understand the language. Tom replied in Spanish, giving a short account of why he and his companions had come to the country, but the giant shook his head. Then Mr. Damon, who knew several languages, tried all of them—but it was of no use.

"We've got to go back to signs," declared Tom, and then, as best he could, he indicated that he and the others had come from afar to seek the giants. He doubted whether he was understood, and he decided to wait until later to try and make them acquainted with the fact that he wanted one of them to come back with him.

The head giant nodded, showing that at least he understood something, and then spoke to his companions. They conversed in their loud voices for some time, and then motioned to the pack animals.

"I guess they want us to come along," said Tom, "but let's have breakfast first. Rad, get things going. Maybe the giants will have some coffee and condensed milk, though they'll have

to take about ten cupsful to make them think they've had anything. Make a lot of coffee, Rad."

"But good land a massy, dey'll eat up ebery-t'ing we got, Massa Tom," objected the colored man.

"Can't help it, Rad. They're our guests and we've got to be polite," replied the youth. "It isn't every day that we have giants to breakfast."

The big men watched curiously while Rad built a fire, and when the colored man was trying to break a tough stick of wood with the axe, one of the giants picked up the fagot and snapped it in his fingers as easily as though it were a twig, though the stick was as thick as Tom's arm.

"Some strength there," murmured Ned to his chum admiringly.

"Yes, if they took a notion to go on a rampage we'd have trouble. But they seem kind and gentle."

Indeed the giants did, and they liked the coffee which they tasted rather gingerly at first. After their first sip they wanted more, made as sweet as possible, and they laughed and talked among themselves while Eradicate boiled pot after pot.

"Dey suah will eat us out of house an' home, Massa Tom," he wailed.

"Never mind, Rad. They will feed us well when we get to their town."

Then the pack animals were laden with their burdens. This was always a task, but for the giants it was child's play. With one hand they would lift a box or bale that used to tax the combined strength of the four travelers, and soon the steers, horses and mules were ready to proceed. The giants went on ahead, to show the way, the first one, who seemed to be called "Oom," for that was the way his companions addressed him, walked beside Tom, who rode on a mule. In fact the giant had to walk slowly, so as not to get ahead of the animal. Oom tried to talk to Tom, but it was hard work to pick out the signs that meant something, and so neither gained much information.

Tom did gather, however, that the giants were out on an early hunt when they had discovered our friends, and their chief town lay about half a day's journey off in the jungle. The path along which they proceeded, was better than the forest trails, and showed signs of being frequently used.

"It doesn't seem possible that we are really among giants, Tom," spoke Ned, as they rode along. "I hardly believed there were giants."

"There always have been giants," declared the young inventor. "I read about them in an en-

cyclopedia before I started on this trip. Of course there's lots of wild stories about giants, but there have really been some very big men. Take the skeleton in the museum of Trinity College, Dublin. It is eight feet and a half in height, and the living man must have even taller. There was a giant named O'Brien, and his skeleton is in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of England—that one is eight feet two inches high, while there are reliable records to show that, when living, O'Brien was two inches taller than that. In fact, according to the books, there have been a number of giants nine feet high."

"Then these chaps aren't so wonderful," replied Ned.

"Oh, we haven't seen them all yet. We may find some bigger than these fellows, though any one of these would be a prize for a museum. Not a one is less than eight feet, and if we could get one say ten feet—that *would* be a find."

"Rather an awkward one," commented Ned.

It did not seem possible that they were really in giant land, yet such was the fact. Of course the country itself was no different from any other part of the jungle, for merely because big men lived in it did not make the trees or plants any larger.

"I tell you how I account for it," said Tom,

as they traveled on. "These men originally belonged to a race of people noted for their great size. Then they must have lived under favorable conditions, had plenty of flesh and bone-forming food, and after several generations they gradually grew larger. You know that by feeding the right kind of food to animals you can make them bigger, while if they get the wrong kind they are runts, or dwarfs."

"Oh, yes; that's a well-known fact," chimed in Mr. Damon.

"Then why not with human beings?" went on Tom. "There's nothing wonderful in this."

"No, but it will be wonderful if we get away with one of these giants," spoke Ned grimly.

Further talk was interrupted by a sudden shouting on the part of the big men. Oom made some rapid motions to Tom, and a little later they emerged from the woods upon a large, grassy plain, on the other side of which could be seen a cluster of big grass and mud huts.

"There is the city of the giants!" cried Tom, and so it proved, a little later, when they got to it.

Now there was nothing remarkable about this city or native town. It was just like any other in the wilder parts of South America or Africa. There was a central place, where, doubtless, the natives gathered on market days, and from this

the huts of the inhabitants stretched out in irregular lines, like streets. Off to one side of the "market square," as Tom called it, was a large hut, surrounded by several smaller ones, and from the manner in which it was laid out, and decorated, it was evident that this was the "palace" of the king, or chief ruler.

"Say, look at that fellow!" cried Ned, pointing to a giant who was just entering the "palace" as Tom dubbed the big hut. "He *looks* eleven feet if he's an inch."

"I believe you!" cried Tom. "Say, I wonder how big the king is?"

"I don't know, but he must be a top-notcher. I wonder what will happen to us?"

Oom, who had Tom and his party in charge, led them to the "palace" and it was evident that they were going to be presented to the chief or native king. Back of our friends stretched out their pack train, the beasts carrying the boxes and bales. Surrounding them were nearly all the inhabitants of the giants' town, and when the cavalcade had come to a halt in front of the "palace," Oom raised his voice in a mighty shout. It was taken up by the populace, and then every one of them knelt down.

"I guess His Royal Highness is about to appear," said Tom grimly.

"Yes, maybe we'd better kneel, too," spoke Ned.

"Not much! We're citizens of the United States, and we don't kneel to anybody. I'm going to stand up."

"So am I!" said Mr. Damon.

An instant later the grass mat that formed the front door of the "palace" was drawn aside, and there stood confronting our hero and his friends, the King of Giant Land. And a mighty king was he in size, for he must have been a shade over ten feet tall, while on either side of him was a man nearly as big as himself.

Once more Oom boomed out a mighty shout and, kneeling as the giants were, they took it up, repeating it three times. The king raised his hand as though in blessing upon his people, and then, eyeing Tom and his three friends he beckoned them to approach.

"He wants to see us at close range," whispered the young inventor. "Come on, Ned and Mr. Damon. Trail along, Eradicate."

"Good—good land ob massy!" stammered the colored man. And then the little party advanced into the "palace" of the giant king.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RIVAL CIRCUS MAN

Tom Swift gazed fearlessly into the face of the giant ruler who confronted him. The young inventor said later that he had made up his mind that to show no fear was the only way of impressing the big king, for surely no show of strength could have done it. With one hand the giant could have crushed the life from our hero. But evidently he had no such intentions, for after gazing curiously at the four travelers who stood before him, and looking for some time at the honest, black face of Eradicate, the king made a motion for them to sit down. They did, upon grass mats in the big hut that formed the palace of the ruler.

It was not a very elaborate place, but then the king's wants were few and easily satisfied. The place was clean, Tom was glad to note.

The king, who was addressed by his subjects as Kosk, as nearly as Tom could get it, asked some questions of Oom, who seemed to be the chief of the hunters. Thereupon the man who

had looked into Tom's and Ned's tent that morning, and who had followed them into the palace, began a recital of how he had found the little travelers. Though Tom and his friends could not understand a word of the language, it was comparatively easy to follow the narrative by the gestures used.

Then the king asked several questions, others of the hunting party were sent for and quizzed, and finally the ruler seemed satisfied, for he rattled off a string of talk in his deep, booming voice.

Truly he was a magnificent specimen of manhood, being as I have said, about ten feet tall, and built in proportion. On either side of him, upon rude benches covered with soft jaguar skins, sat two men, evidently his brothers, for they looked much like the king. One was called Tola and the other Koku, for the ruler addressed them from time to time, and seemed to be asking their advice.

"They're making up their minds what to do with us," murmured Tom. "I only hope they let us stay long enough to learn the language, and then I can make an offer to take one back to the United States with me."

"Jove! Wouldn't it be great if you could get the king!" exclaimed Ned.

"Oh, that's too much, but I'd like one of his brothers. They're each a good nine feet tall, and they must be as strong as horses."

In contrast to some giants of history, whose only claim to notoriety lay in their height, these giants were very powerful. Many giants have flabby muscles, but these of South America were like athletes. Tom realized this when there suddenly entered the audience chamber a youth of about our hero's age, but fully seven feet tall, and very big. He was evidently the king's son, for he wore a jaguar skin, which seemed to be a badge of royalty. He had seemingly entered without permission, to see the curious strangers, for the king spoke quickly to him, and then to Tola, who with a friendly grin on his big face lifted the lad with one hand and deposited him in a room that opened out of the big chamber.

"Did you see that!" cried Ned. "He lifted him as easily as you or I would a cat, and I'll bet that fellow weighed close to four hundred pounds, Tom."

"I should say so! It's great!"

The audience was now at an end, and Tom thought it was about time to make some sort of a present to the king to get on good terms with him. He looked out of the palace hut and saw that their pack animals were close at hand. Near-

by was one that had on its back a box containing a phonograph and some records.

Making signs that he wanted to bring in some of his baggage, Tom stepped out of the hut, telling his friends to wait for him. The king and the other giants watched the lad curiously, but did not endeavor to stop him.

"I'm going to give him a little music," went on the young inventor as he adjusted the phonograph, and slipped in a record of a lively dance air. His motions were curiously watched, and when the phonograph started and there was a whirr of the mechanism, some of the giants who had crowded into the king's audience chamber, showed a disposition to run. But a word of command from their ruler stopped them.

Suddenly the music started and, coming forth as it did from the phonograph horn, in the midst of that hut, in which stood the silence-awed giants, it was like a bolt of lightning from the clear sky.

At first the king and all the others seemed struck dumb, and then there arose a mighty shout, and one word was repeated over and over again. It sounded like "Chackalok! Chackalok!" and later Tom learned that it meant wizard, magician or something like that.

Shout after shout rent the air, and was taken

up by those outside, for through the open door the strains of music floated. The giants seemed immensely pleased, after their first fright, and suddenly the king, coming down from his throne, stood with his big ear as nearly inside the horn as he could get it.

A great grin spread over his face and then, approaching Tom, he leaned over, touched him once on the forehead, and uttered a word. At this sign of royal favor the other giants at once bowed to Tom.

"Say," cried Ned, "you've got his number all right! You're one of the royal family now, Tom."

"It looks like it. Well, I'm glad of it, for I want to be on friendly terms with His Royal Highness."

Once more the king addressed Tom, and the head hunter, motioning to Tom and his friends, led them out of the palace, and to a large hut not far off. This, he made himself understood by signs, was to be their resting place, and truly it was not a bad home, for it was well made. It had simple furniture in it, low couches covered with skins, stools, and there were several rooms to it.

Calling in authorative tones to his fellow hunters, Oom had them take the packs off the beasts

of burdens and soon the boxes, bales and packages were carried into the big hut, which was destined to be the abiding place of our friends for some time. The animals were then led away.

"Well, here we are, safe and sound, with all our possessions about us," commented Tom, when all but Oom had withdrawn. "I guess we'll make out all right in giant land. I wonder what they have to eat? Or perhaps we'd better tackle some of our own grub."

He looked at Oom, who laughed gleefully. Then Tom rubbed his stomach, opened his mouth and pointed to it and said: "We'd like to eat—we're hungry!"

Oom boomed out something in his bass voice, grinned cheerfully, and hurried out. A little later he came back, and following him, a number of giant women. Each one bore a wooden platter or slab of bark which answered for a plate. The plates were covered with broad palm leaves, and when they had been set down on low benches, and the coverings removed, our friends saw they had food in abundance.

There was some boiled lamb, some roasted fowls, some cereal that looked like boiled rice, some sweet potatoes, a number of other things which could only be guessed at, and a big gourd filled with something that smelled like sweet cider.

"Say, this is a feast all right, after what we've been living on!" cried Tom.

Once more Oom laughed joyfully, pointing to the food and to our friends in turn.

"Oh, we'll eat all right!" exclaimed Tom. "Don't worry about that!"

The good-natured giant showed them where they could find rude wooden dishes and table implements, and then he left them alone. It was rather awkward at first, for though the bench or table looked low in comparison to the size of the room, yet it was very high, to allow for the long legs of the giants getting under it.

"If we stay here long enough we can saw off the table legs," said the young inventor. "Now for our first meal in giant land."

They were just helping themselves when there arose a great shouting outside.

"I wonder what's up now?" asked Tom, pausing with upraised fork.

"Maybe the king is coming to see us," suggested Ned.

"I'll look," volunteeered Mr. Damon, as he went to the door. Then he called quickly:

"Tom! Ned! Look! It's that minister we met on the ship—Reverend Josiah Blinderpool! How in the world did he ever get here? And how strangely he's dressed!"

Well might Mr. Damon say this, for the supposed clergyman was attired in a big checked suit, a red vest, a tall hat and white canvas shoes. In fact he was almost like some theatrical performer.

The gaudily-dressed man was accompanied by two natives, and all rode mules, and there were three other animals, laden with packs on either side.

"What's his game?" mused Ned.

The answer came quickly and from the man himself. Riding forward toward the king's hut or palace, while the populace of wondering giants followed behind, the man raised his voice in a triumphant announcement.

"Here at last!" he cried. "In giant land! And I'm ahead of Tom Swift for all his tricks. I've got Tom Swift beat a mile."

"Oh, you have!" shouted our hero with a sudden resolve, as he stepped into view. "Well, you've got another guess coming. I'm here ahead of you, and there's standing room only."

"Tom Swift!" gasped the rival circus man. "Tom Swift here in ahead of me!"

CHAPTER XVII

HELD CAPTIVES

THERE was a great commotion among the giants. Men, women and children ran to and fro, and a number of the largest of the big men could be seen hurrying into the palace hut of King Kosk. If the arrival of Tom and his friends had created a surprise it was more than doubled when the circus man, and his small caravan, advanced into the giants' city. His approach had been unheralded because the giants were so taken up with Tom and his party that no one thought to guard the paths leading into the village. And, as a matter of fact, the giants were so isolated, they were so certain of their own strength, and they had been unmolested so many years, that they did not dream of danger.

As for our hero, he stood in the hut gazing at his rival, while Hank Delby, in turn, stared at the young inventor. Then Hank dismounted from his mule and approached Tom's hut.

"Bless my railroad ticket!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "This is a curious state of affairs! What in the world are we to do, Tom?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. We'll have to wait until we see what *he* does. He's been following us all along. He was that fake minister on the boat. It's a wonder we didn't get on to him. I believe he's been trying to learn our secret ever since Mr. Preston warned us about him. Now he's here and he'll probably try to spoil our chances for getting a giant so that he may get one for himself. Perhaps Andy Foger gave him a tip about our plans."

"But can't we stop him?" asked Ned.

"I'm going to try!" exclaimed Tom grimly.

"Here he comes," spoke Mr. Damon quickly. "I wonder what he wants?"

Hank Delby had started toward the big hut that sheltered our friends, while the gathered crowd of curious giants looked on and wondered what the arrival of two white parties so close together could mean.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Tom, when his rival had come within speaking distance.

"There's no use beating about the bush with you, Tom Swift," was the frank answer. "I may as well out with it. I came after a giant, and I'm going to get one for Mr. Waydell."

"Then you took advantage of our trail, and followed us?" asked the young inventor.

"Oh, you can put it that way if you like,"

replied Delby calmly. "I *have* followed you, and a hard time I've had of it. I tried to do it quietly, but you got on to my tricks. However it doesn't matter. I'm here now, and I'm going to beat you out if I can."

"I remember now!" exclaimed Ned whispering in Tom's ear, "he was disguised as one of the mule drivers and you fired him because he had a revolver. Don't you remember, Tom?"

"That's right!" exclaimed the young inventor as he noted the face and form of Delby more closely. Then our hero added: "You played a low-down trick, Mr. Delby, and it won't do you any good. I caught you trying to sneak along in my company and I'll catch you again. I'm here first, and I've got the best right to try and get a giant for Mr. Preston, and if you had any idea of fair play——"

"All's fair in this business, Tom Swift," was the quick answer. "I'm going to do my best to beat you, and I expect you to do your best to beat me. I can't speak any fairer than that. It's war between us, from now on, and you might as well know it. One thing I will promise you, though, if there's any danger of you or your party getting hurt by these big men I'll fight on your side. But I guess they are too gentle to fight."

"We can look after ourselves," declared Tom. "And since it's to be war between us look out for yourself."

"Don't worry!" exclaimed Tom's rival with a laugh. "I've gone through a lot to get here, and I'm not going to give up without a struggle. I guess——"

But he did not finish his sentence for at that moment Oom, the big hunting giant, came up behind him, tapped him on the shoulder, and pointed to the king's hut, motioning to indicate that Mr. Delby was wanted there.

"Very good," said the circus agent in what he tried to make sound like a jolly voice, "I'm to call on his majesty; am I? Here's where I beat you to it, Tom Swift."

Tom did not answer, but there was a worried look on his face, as he turned to join his friends in the big hut. And, as he looked from a window, and saw Delby being led into the presence of Kosk, Tom could hear the strains of the big phonograph he had presented to the king.

"I guess his royal highness will remain friends with us," said Ned with a smile, as he heard the music. "He can see what a lot of presents and other things we have, and as for that Delby, he doesn't seem to have much of anything."

"Oh, I haven't shown half the things I have as

yet," spoke Tom. "But I don't like this, just the same. Those giants may turn from us, and favor him on the slightest pretence. I guess we've got our work cut out for us."

"Then let's plan some way to beat him," suggested Mr. Damon. "Look over your goods, Tom, and make the king a present that will bind his friendship to us."

"I believe I will," decided the young inventor and then he and Ned began overhauling the boxes and bales, while a crowd of curious giants stood without their hut, and another throng surrounded the palace of the giant king.

"There goes Delby out to get something from his baggage," announced Ned, looking from the window. Tom saw his rival taking something from one of the packs slung across the back of a mule. Soon the circus agent hurried back into the king's hut, and a moment later there was heard the strains of a banjo being picked by an unpracticed hand. It was succeeded by a rattling tune played in good style.

"Bless my fiddlestick!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "Does your phonograph have a banjo record, Tom?"

"No," was the somewhat hesitating answer of the young inventor. "Delby who can play a banjo himself must have given Kosk one for a

present, and, like a child, the king is amused by the latest novelty. So far he has scorred one on us," he added, as once more they heard the unmelodious strains of the banjo slowly picked. "The king is evidently learning to play the instrument, and he'd rather have that than a phonograph which only winds up."

"But haven't you some other things you can give the king to off-set the banjo?" asked Mr. Damon.

"Plenty of them, replied Tom. "But if I give him—say a toy steam engine, for I have one among our things—what is to prevent Delby giving him some other novelty that will take his attention? In that way we'll sea-saw back and forth, and I guess Delby has had more experience in this business than I have. It's going to be a question which of us gets a giant."

"Bless my reserved seat ticket!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "I never heard of such a thing! But, Tom, I'm sure we'll win out."

"Get something startling to give the king," advised Ned, and Tom began opening one of the boxes that had been transported with such labor from the coast.

"Delby had much better luck with his mule drivers than we did Tom," remarked Ned as he saw the two natives standing by the pack animals

of the rival circus man. "They evidently didn't get scared off by the giants."

"No, but probably he didn't tell them where they were headed for. Though, as a matter of fact, I don't believe any one has anything to fear from these big men. All they ask is to be let alone. They're not at all warlike, and I don't believe they'd attack the other natives. But probably their size makes them feared, and when our drivers heard the word 'giant' they simply wilted."

"Guess you're right. But come on, Tom. If we're going to make the king a present that will open his eyes, and get him on our side instead of Delby's, we'd better be getting at it."

"I will. This is what I'm going to give him," and Tom brought out from a box a small toy circus, with many performing animals and acrobats, the whole being worked by a small steam engine that burned alcohol for fuel. A little water put in the boiler of the toy engine, a lighting of the alcohol wick and there would be a toy that even a youngster of the United States might be proud to own.

"Mah land a massy!" exclaimed Eradicate as Tom got the apparatus ready to work. "Dat shore will please him!"

"It ought to," replied the young inventor. "Come on, now I'm ready."

Delby had not yet come from the king's hut, and as Tom and his friends, bearing the new toy, were about to leave the structure that had been set aside for their use, they saw a crowd of the giant men approaching. Each of the big men carried a club and a spear.

"Bless my eye glasses!" gasped Mr. Damon. "Something is wrong. What can it be?"

He had his answer a moment later. With a firm but gentle motion the chief giant shoved our four friends back into the hut, and then pulled the grass mat over the opening. Then, as Tom and the others could see by looking from a crack, he and several others took their position in front, while other giants went to the various windows, stationing themselves outside like sentries around a guard house.

"Bless my——" began Mr. Damon, but words failed him.

"We're prisoners!" gasped Ned.

"It looks like it," admitted Tom grimly. "Evidently Delby has carried out his threat and set the king against us. We are to be held captives here, and he can do as he pleases. Oh, why didn't I think sooner."

CHAPTER XVIII

TOM'S MYSTERIOUS BOX

THE young inventor walked slowly back to the middle of the hut—a prison now it was—and sat down on a bench. The others followed his example, and the elaborate toy, with which they had hoped to win the king's favor, was laid aside. For a moment there was silence in the structure—a silence broken only by the pacing up and down of the giant guards outside. Then Eradicate spoke.

"Massa Tom," began the aged negro, "can't we git away from heah?"

"It doesn't seem so, Rad."

"Can't we shoot some of dem giants wif de 'lectric guns, an' carry a couple ob 'em off after we stun 'em like?"

"No, Rad; I'm afraid violent measures won't do, though now that you speak of the guns I think that we had better get them ready."

"You're not going to shoot any of them, are you, Tom?" asked Mr. Damon quickly.

"No, but if they continue to turn against us as easily as they have, there is no telling what may happen. If they attack us we will have to defend ourselves. But I think they are too gentle for that, unless they are unduly aroused by what misstatements Hank Delby may make against us."

"Misstatements?" inquired Ned.

"Yes. I don't doubt but what he told the king a lot of stuff that isn't true, to cause his majesty to make us captives here. Probably he said we came to destroy the giant city with magic, or something like that, and he represented himself as a simple traveler. He's used to that sort of business, for he has often tried to get ahead of Mr. Preston in securing freaks or valuable animals for the circus. He wants to make it look bad for us, and good for himself. So far he has succeeded. But I've got a plan."

"What is it?" asked Mr. Damon.

"I'll tell you when I've got it more worked out. The thing to do now is to get in shape to stand off the giants if they should attack us. This hut is pretty strong, and we can risk a siege in here. Let's arrange the boxes and bales into a sort of breastwork, and then we'll take the electric rifles inside."

This was soon done, and, though there was considerable noise attending the moving about of

the boxes and bales, the giant guards did not seem at all alarmed. They did not even take the trouble to stop the work, though they looked in the windows. In a short time there was a sort of hollow square formed in the middle of the big main room, and inside of this our friends could give battle.

"And now for my plan of teaching these giants a lesson," said Tom, when this work was finished. "Ned, help me open this box," and he indicated one with his initials on in red letters.

"That's the same one you saved from the fire in the ship," commented Ned.

"Yes, and I can't put it to just exactly the use I intended, as the situation has changed—for the worse I may say. But this box will answer a good purpose," and Tom and Ned proceeded to open the mysterious case which the young inventor had transported with such care.

"Bless my cannon cracker!" exclaimed Mr. Damon who watched them. "You're as careful of that as if it contained dynamite."

"It does contain something like that," answered Tom. "It has some blasting powder in, and I was going to use it to show the giants how little their strength would prevail against the power which the white man could secure from some harmless looking powder. There are also

a lot of fireworks in the box, and I intend to use them to scare these big men. That's why I was so afraid when I heard that there was a blaze near my box. I was worried for fear the ship would be blown up. But I can't use the blasting powder—at least not now. But we'll give these giants an idea of what Fourth of July looks like. Come on, Ned, we'll take a look and see from which window it will be safest to set off the rockets and other things, as I don't want to set fire to any of the grass huts."

Eradicate and Mr. Damon looked on wonderingly while Tom and his chum got out the packages of fireworks which had been kept safe and dry. As for the giant guards, if they saw through the windows what was going on, they made no effort to stop Tom.

Tom had brought along a good collection of sky rockets, aerial bombs, Roman candles and similiar things, together with the blasting powder. The latter was put in a safe place in a side room, and then, with some boards, the young inventor and his chum proceeded to make a sort of firing stand. One big window opened out toward a vacant stretch of woods into which it would not be dangerous to aim the fireworks.

Building the stand took some time, and they knocked off to make a meal from the food that

had been brought, and which they had been about to eat when the circus man had appeared. The food was good, and it made them feel better.

"I hope they won't forget us to-morrow," observed Tom, for there was enough of the first meal left for supper. "But if they do we have some food of our own."

"Oh, I don't think they mean to starve us," remarked Ned. "I think they are just acting on suggestions from that circus man."

"Perhaps," agreed Tom. "Well, they may sing another tune when we get through with them."

As night approached the giant guards about the hut were changed, and again the women came, bearing platters of food. There was plenty of it, showing that the king, however fickle his friendship might be, did not intend to starve his captives. Tom and his friends had not seen Delby come out of the royal palace, and they concluded that he was still with his giant majesty.

"Is it dark enough now, Tom?" asked Ned of his chum, as they sat about the rude wooden platform which they had made to hold the fireworks. "Shall we set them off?"

"Pretty soon now. Wait until it gets a little darker, and the effect will be better." The room was dimly lighted by a small portable electric

lamp, one of several Tom had brought along in his mysterious box. The lamps were operated by miniature but powerful dry batteries. The giant guards were still outside, but they showed no disposition to interfere with our friends.

"There's something going on at the palace," reported Mr. Damon, who was watching the big hut. "There are a lot of giants around it with torches."

"Maybe they're going to escort Delby to a hut with the same honors they paid us," suggested Tom. "If they do, we'll set off the fireworks as he comes out and maybe they'll think he is afflicted with bad magic, and they'll give us our freedom."

"Good idea!" cried Ned. "Say, that's what they're going to do," he added a moment later as, in the glare of a number of torches, there could be seen issuing from the king's palace, the two big giants, evidently his brothers. Between them was the figure of the circus man, looking like a dwarf. He was not so far away but what the smile of triumph on his face could be seen as he glanced in the direction of the darkened hut where Tom and his friends were captives.

"Now's our chance!" cried the young inventor. "Set 'em off, Ned. You help, Mr. Damon. The more noise and fuss we make at once, the more

impressive it will be. Set off everything in sight!"

There was a flicker of matches as they were applied to the fuses, and then a splutter of sparks. An instant later it seemed as if the whole heavens had been lighted up.

Sky rockets shot screaming toward the zenith, aerial bombs went whirling slantingly upward amid a shower of sparks, then to burst with deafening reports, sending out string after string of colored lights. Red and green fire gleamed, and the hot balls from Roman candles burst forth. There was a whizz, a rush and a roar. Blinding flashes and startling reports followed each other as Tom and his friends set off the fireworks. It was like the Independence Day celebration of some little country village, and to the simple giants it must have seemed as if a volcano had suddenly gone into action.

For several minutes the din and racket, the glare and explosions, kept up, pouring out of the big window of the hut. And then, as the last of the display was shot off, and darkness seemed to settle down blacker than ever over the giant village, there arose howls of fear and terror from the big men and their women and children. They cried aloud in their thunderous voices, and there was fear in every cry.

CHAPTER XIX

WEAK GIANTS

A GREAT silence followed the setting off of the fireworks—silence and darkness—and even the circus man ceased to shout. He wanted to see what the effect would be. So did Tom and the others. When their eyes had become used to the gloom again, after the glare of the rockets and bombs, the young inventor said:

"Look out of the windows, Ned, and see if our guards have run away."

Ned did as requested, but for a few seconds he could make out nothing. Then he cried out:

"They've gone, but they're coming back again, and there are twice as many. I guess they don't want us to escape, Tom, for fear we may do a lot of damage."

"Bless my hitching post!" cried Mr. Damon. "The guards doubled? We *are* in a predicament, Tom."

"Yes, I'm afraid so. The fireworks didn't just have the effect I expected. I thought they'd be

glad to let us go, fearing that we could work magic, and might turn it on them. Most of the natives are deadly afraid of magic, the evil eye, witch doctors, and stuff like that. But evidently we've impressed the giants in the wrong way. If we could only speak their language now, we could explain that unless they let us go we might destroy their village, though of course we wouldn't do anything of the kind. If we could only speak their language but we can't."

"Do you suppose they understood what Delby said?" asked Ned.

"Not a bit of it! He was just desperate when he yelled out that way. He saw that we had an advantage on him—or at least I thought we did, but I guess we didn't," and Tom gazed out of the windows in front of each of which stood two of the largest giants. By means of the torches it could be seen that the circus man was being taken to another hut, some distance away from the royal one. Then, after an awed silence, there broke out a confused talking and shouting among the giant population, that was drawn up in a circle a respectful distance from the hut where the captives were confined. Doubtless they were discussing what had taken place, hoping and yet fearing, that there might be more fireworks.

"Well, we might as well go to bed," declared

Tom at length. "We can't do any more to-night, and I'm dead tired. In the morning we can talk over new plans. My box of tricks isn't exhausted yet."

In spite of their strange captivity our friends slept well, and they did not awaken once during the night, for they had worked hard that day, and were almost exhausted. In the morning they looked out and saw guards still about the hut.

"Now for a good breakfast, and another try!" exclaimed Tom, as he washed in a big earthen jar of water that had been provided. Freshened by the cool liquid, they were made hungry for the meal which was brought to them a little later. They noticed that the women cooks looked at them with fear in their eyes, and did not linger as they had done before. Instead they set down the trays of food and hurried away.

"They're getting to be afraid of us," declared Tom. "If we could only talk their language——"

"By Jove!" suddenly interrupted Ned. "I've just thought of something. Jake Poddington you know—the agent for Mr. Preston who so mysteriously disappeared."

"Well, what about him?" asked Tom. "Did you see him?"

"No, but he may be here—a captive like ourselves. If he is he's been here long enough to

have learned the language of the giants, and if he could translate for us, we wouldn't have any trouble. Why didn't we think of it before? If we could only find Mr. Poddington!"

"Yes, *if* we only could," put in Tom. "But it's a slim chance. I declare I've forgotten about him in the last few days, so many things have happened. But what makes you think he is here, Ned?"

"Why he started for giant land, you'll remember, and he may have reached here. Oh, if we could only find him, and save him and save ourselves!"

"It would be great!" admitted Tom. "But I'm afraid we can't do it. There's a chance, though, that Mr. Poddington may be here, or may have been here. If we could only get out and make some explorations or some inquiries. It's tough to be cooped up here like chickens."

Tom looked from the window, vainly hoping that the guards might have been withdrawn. The giants were still before the windows and doors.

For a week this captivity was kept up, and in that time Tom and his friends had occasional glimpses of Hank Delby going to and from the king's hut. His majesty himself was not seen, but there appeared to be considerable activity in the giant village.

From their prison-hut the captives could see the native market held in the big open space, and giants from surrounding towns and the open country came in to trade. There were also curious about the white captives, and there was a constant throng around the big hut, peering in. So also there was about the hut where the circus man had his headquarters. Delby seemed to be free to come and go as he choose.

"I guess he's laying his plans to take a giant or two away with him," remarked Tom one day. "I wonder what will become of us, when he does go?"

It was a momentous question, and no one could answer it. Tom was doing some hard thinking those days. Two weeks passed and there was no change. Our friends were still captives in giant land. They had tried, by signs, to induce their guards to take some message to the king, but the giants refused with shakes of their big heads.

Yet the adventurers could not complain of bad treatment. They were well fed, and the guards seemed good natured, laughing among themselves, and smiling whenever they saw any of the captives. But let Tom, or some of the others, step across the threshold of the door, and they were kindly, but firmly, shoved back.

"It's of no use!" exclaimed Tom in despair

one day, after a bold attempt to walk out. "We've got to do something. If we can't get word to the king we've got to plan some way to gain the friendship, or work on the fear of the guards. We have about the same crowd every time. If we can scare them they may keep far enough off so we can have a chance to escape."

"Escape! That's the thing!" cried Mr. Damon. "Why can't we put the airship together in this hut, Tom, and fly away in it?"

"We can, when the right time comes—if it ever does—but first we've got to work on the guards. Let me see what I can do? Ha! I have it. Ned, come here, I want your help. I'm going to show these giants that, with all their strength, I can make each of them as weak as a baby, and, at the same time prove that they can't lift even a light weight."

"How you going to do it?" asked Mr. Damon.

"I'll soon show you. Come on, Ned."

Tom and his chum were busy for several days among the various boxes and bales that formed the baggage. They rigged up two pieces of apparatus which I will describe in due time. They also opened several boxes of trinkets and trading goods, which had been brought along for barter. These they distributed among the guards, and, though the giants were immensely pleased, they

did not get friendly enough to walk off and leave our friends free to do as they pleased.

"Well, I guess we're ready for the lesson now," remarked Tom one afternoon, when they had been held captives for about three weeks. "If they won't respond to gentle treatment we'll try some other kind of persuasion."

The guards had become so friendly of late that some of them often spent part of the day inside the hut, looking at the curious things Tom and his party had brought with them. This was just what the young inventor wanted, as he was now ready to give them a second lesson in white man's magic.

Tom and Ned had learned a few words of the giant's language, which was quite simple, though it sounded hard, and one day, after he had shown them simple toys, the young inventor brought forth a simple-looking box, with two shining handles.

"Here is a little thing," explained Tom, partly by words, and partly by using signs, "a simple little thing which, if one of you will but take hold of, you cannot let go of again until I move my finger. Do you believe that a small white man like myself can make this little thing stronger than a giant?" he asked.

One of the biggest of the guards shook his head.

"Try," invited Tom. "Take hold of the handles. At first you will be able to let go easily. But, when I shall move my finger though but a little, you will be held fast. Then, another movement, and you will be loose again. Can I do it?"

Once more the giant shook his head.

"Try," urged Tom, and he put the two shining handles into the big palms of the giant. The native grinned and some of his companions laughed. Then to show how easy it was he let go. He took hold again.

"Now!" cried Tom, and he moved his finger.

Instantly the giant leaped up into the air. He uttered a howl that seemed to shake the very roof of the hut, and his arms were as rigid as poles. They were drawn up in knots, and though he tried with all his great might, he could not loose his fingers from the shiny handles. He howled in terror, and his companions murmured in amazement.

"It is as I told you!" exclaimed Tom. "Is it enough?"

"Loose me! Loose me! Loose me from the terrible magic!" cried the giant, and, with a movement of his finger, Tom switched off the current

from the electric battery. Instantly the giant's arms dropped to his side, his hands relaxed and the handles dropped clattering to the floor.

With a look of fear, and a howl of anguish, the big guard fled, but to the surprise and gratification of Tom and his friends the others seemed only amused, and they nodded in a friendly fashion to the captives. They all pressed forward to try the battery.

One and all endeavored to loose their hands after Tom, by a movement of his forefinger, had turned the switch of the battery, and one and all of the giant guards were unable to stir, as the electricity gripped their muscles. They were evidently awed.

"This is working better than the fireworks did," murmured Tom. "Now if I can only keep up the good work, and get ahead of Delby I'll be all right. Now for the other test, Ned."

Ned brought from a box what looked to be a small iron bar, with a large handle on the top. The bottom was ground very smooth.

"This is very small and light," explained Tom, partly by signs, and partly by words. "I can easily lift it by one finger, and to a giant it is but a feather's weight."

He let the giants handle it, and of course they could fell scarcely any weight at all, for it tipped

the scales at only a pound. But is was shortly to be much heavier.

"See," went on the young inventor. "I place the weight on the floor, and lift it easily. Can you do it?"

The giants laughed at such a simple trick. Tom set the iron bar down and raised it several times. So did several of the giants.

"Now for the test!" cried Tom with a dramatic gesture. "I shall put my magic upon you, and you shall all become as weak as babies. You cannot lift the bar of iron!"

As he spoke he made a signal to Ned, who stood in a distant corner of the room. Then Tom carefully placed the weight on a sheet of white paper on a certain spot on the floor of the hut and motioned to the largest giant to pick up the iron bar.

With a laugh of contempt and confidence, the big man stooped over and grasped the handle. But he did not arise. Instead, the muscles of his naked arm swelled out in great bunches.

"See, you are as a little babe!" taunted Tom. "Another may try!"

Another did, and another and another, until it came the turn of the mightiest giant of all the guard that day. With a sudden wrench he sought to lift the bar. He tugged and strained. He bent

his back and his legs; his shoulders heaved with the terrific effort he made—but the bar still held to the floor of the hut as though a part of the big beams themselves.

"Now!" cried Tom, "I shall show you how a white man's magic makes him stronger than the biggest giant."

Once more he made a hidden sign to Ned, and then, stooping over, Tom crooked his little finger in the handle of the iron bar and lifted it as easily as if it was a feather.

CHAPTER XX

THE LONE CAPTIVE

THE murmurs of astonishment that greeted Tom's seemingly marvelous feat of strength was even greater than that which had marked his trick with the electric battery. The giants stared at him as though they feared the next moment he might suddenly turn upon them and hurl them about like ten-pins.

"You see, it is easy when one knows the white man's magic," spoke Tom, making many gestures to help along. "Go tell your king that it is not well that he keeps us prisoners here, for if he does not soon let us go the magic may break loose and destroy his palace!"

There was a gasp of dismay from the giants at this bold talk.

"Better go easy, Tom," counseled Ned.

"I'm tired of going easy," replied the young inventor. "Something has got to happen pretty soon, or it will be all up with us. I'm getting weary of being cooped up here. Not that the

king doesn't treat us well, but I don't want to be a prisoner. I want to get out and see if we can't arrange to take a couple of these giants back for Mr. Preston. That Delby sneak has things all his own way."

And this was so, for the circus man had poisoned the king's mind against Tom and his friends, representing (as our hero learned later) that the first arrivals in giant land were dangerous people, and not to be trusted. On his own part, Hank Delby intimated that he would always be a friend to the king, would teach him many of the white man's secrets, and would make him powerful. Thus the circus man was making plans for his own ends, and he was scheming to get a couple of giants for himself, who he intended to hurry away, leaving Tom and his friends to escape as best they could.

And Delby had brought with him some novelties in the way of toys and machinery that seemed greatly to take the fancy of the king. Tom realized this when he saw his rival free to come and go, and one reason why our hero did the experiments just related was so that the king might hear of them, and wonder.

"Go tell the king that, strong as he is, I am stronger," went on Tom boldly to tne giant guards. "I am not afraid of him."

"Bless my war club, Tom, aren't you a little rash to talk that way?" asked Mr. Damon.

"No. As I said, I want things to happen. If I can only get the king curious enough to come here I can show him things to open his eyes. I'll work the miniature circus, and explain that some of his subjects can take part in a real one if they will come with us. I want to beat this Delby at his own game."

"That's the stuff!" cried Ned. "Stick to it, Tom. I'll help you, and we'll get a giant or two yet. And maybe we can get some news of poor Jake Poddington."

"I intend to make inquiries about him, now that these guards are a little more friendly," said Tom. "It may be that he is a prisoner in this very village."

The giant guards, now that they had gotten over their fright at their own inability to raise the bar while Tom had lifted it with one finger, again crowded around, asking that the trick be repeated. Tom did it, with the same result.

None of the giants could move the iron, yet Tom had no difficulty in doing so. Of course my readers have already guessed how the trick was done. It was worked by a strong magnet, hidden in the floor. At a signal from Tom, Ned would switch on the current. The iron would be held

fast and immovable, but when Tom himself went to raise it Ned would cut off the electricity and the bar was lifted as easily as an ordinary piece of iron. But simple as the trick was, it impressed the giants. Then Tom did some other stunts for them, simple experiments in physics, that every High School lad has done in class.

"I want to get these guards friendly with me," he explained. "In time the news will reach the king and he'll be so curious that he'll come here and then—well, we'll see what will happen."

But this did not take place as soon as Tom desired. In fact, the giants were very slow to act. The guards did get quite friendly, and every day they wanted the same two first tricks performed over again. Tom did them many times, wondering when the king would come.

Then he played a bold game, and made open inquiries about a white man, one like the king's captives, who might have come to giant land about a year previous.

"Is there a lone white captive here?" asked Tom.

The giant guard to whom he directed his question gave a start, for Tom could now speak the language fairly well, and, after the first indication of surprise, the guard muttered something to his companions. There was a startled ejacu-

lation, a curious glance at the captives, and then —silence. The guards filed silently away, and, a little later, could be seen going in the king's big hut.

"By Jove, Tom!" cried Ned. "You touched 'em that time. There's something up, as sure as you're born!"

"I believe so myself," agreed the young inventor. "And now to throw a real scare into these giants," he added, as he went to a distant room of the hut where he had hidden some of the things he had taken from his "box of tricks," as Ned dubbed it.

"Bless my necktie!" cried Mr. Damon. "What's up now, Tom."

"I'm going to show these giants that they'd better make friends with us soon, or we may blow their whole town sky-high!" cried Tom. "I'm going to use some of the blasting powder—just a pinch, so to speak—and knock an empty hut into slivers. I think that will impress these fellows. If I can only——"

"Look, Tom! suddenly cried Ned. "The king's two brothers are coming here. Something's up. He's sent some of the family to interview us. Get ready to receive them."

"Couldn't be better!" cried the young inventor.

"I've been waiting for this. Now I'll give them a surprise party."

The two big brothers of the king, for such Tom and his friends had recently learned was the relationship the giants on either side of the "throne" bore to the ruler, were indeed headed toward the hut of the captives. They came alone, in their royal garments of jaguar skins, and, standing about the palace hut, could be seen the giant guards who had doubtless carried the news of the question Tom had asked.

"Come on, Ned, we've got to get busy!" exclaimed Tom. "Connect the electric battery, and get that magnet in shape. I'm going to make a fuse for this blasting powder bomb, and if I can get those royal brothers to plant it for me, there'll be some high jinks soon."

Tom busied himself in making an improvised bomb, while Ned attended to the electrical attachments, and Mr. Damon and Eradicate acted as general assistants.

The two giant brothers entered the hut and greeted Tom and the others calmly. Then they explained that the king had sent them to investigate certain stories told by the guard.

"I'll show you!" exclaimed Tom, and he induced them to take hold of the handles of the battery. The current was turned on full strength,

and from the manner in which the royal brothers writhed and howled Tom judged that the experiment was a success.

"With all your strength you can not let go until I move my finger," the young inventor explained, and it was so. Even the skeptical giants agreed on that.

"Now I shall show you that I am stronger than you!" exclaimed Tom, and though the giants smiled incredulously so it was, for the magnet trick worked as well as before. There were murmurs of surprise from the two immense brothers, and they talked rapidly together.

"I will now show you that I can call the lightning from the sky to do my bidding," went on Tom. "Is that possible to any of you giants?"

"Never! Never! No man can do it!" cried Tola and Koku together.

"Then watch me!" invited Tom. "Is there an empty hut near here?" he asked. "One that it will do no harm to destroy?"

Tola pointed to one visible from the window of the prison of our friends.

"Then take this little ball, with the string attached to it, and place it in the hut," went on Tom. "Then flee for your lives, for standing from here, I shall call the lightning down, and you shall see the hut destroyed."

"Why don't you ask them something about Jake Poddington?" asked Ned.

"Time enough for that after I've shown them what a little powder will do, when I attach electric wires to it and press a button," replied Tom. "I've got that bomb fixed so it will go off by an electric fuse. If they'll only put it in the hut for me. I'd do it myself, only they won't let me go out."

The brothers conferred for a moment and then, seeming to arrive at a decision, Koku, who was slightly the larger, took the bomb, looked curiously at it, and walked with it toward the empty hut, the electric wire being reeled out behind him by Tom.

The bomb was left inside the frail structure, the two brothers hurried away, and, standing at a safe distance from the hut of the captives, as well as the one that Tom had promised to destroy by lightning, they waved their hands to show that they were ready.

"Bless my admission ticket!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "You've got quite an audience, Tom."

And so he had, for there was a crowd in the market square, another throng about the king's palace, while all about, hidden behind trees or huts, was nearly the whole population of the giant town.

"That's what I want," said the young inventor. "It will be all the more impressive."

"And there's the king himself!" exclaimed Ned. "He's standing in the door of his royal hut."

"Better yet!" cried Tom. "Are those wires all connected, Ned?"

"Yes," answered his chum, after a quick inspection.

"Then here she goes!" cried Tom, as he pressed the button.

Instantly the hut, in which the bomb had been placed, arose in the air. The roof was lifted off, the sides spread out and there was a great flash of fire and a puff of smoke.

Then as the smoke cleared away Ned cried out:

"Look, Tom Look! You've blown a hole in the hut next to the one you destroyed!"

Yes, and bless my check book!" exclaimed Mr. Damon, "some one is running out of it. A white man, Tom! A white man!"

"It's Poddington! Poor Jake Poddington. We've found him at last! This way, Mr. Poddington! This way! Mr. Preston sent us to rescue you!" cried Tom.

CHAPTER XXI

A ROYAL CONSPIRACY

Howls of terror, cries of anger, and a rushing to and fro on the part of the giants, followed the latest trick of Tom Swift to impress them with his power. But to all this the young inventor and his friends paid no attention. Their eyes were fixed on the ragged figure of the white man who was rushing toward their hut as fast as his legs, manacled as they were, would let him.

"Come on! Come on!" cried Tom.

"Look out!" yelled Ned. "Some of the giants are after him, Tom!"

Several of the big men, after their first fright, had recovered sufficiently to pursue the captive so strangely released by the explosion.

"Hand me an electric rifle, Ned!" cried Tom.

"Bless my shoe laces!" cried Mr. Damon. "You're not going to kill any of the giants; are you, Tom?"

"Well, I'm not going to let them capture Jake Poddington again," was the quick answer, "but

I guess if I stun a few of them with the electric bullets that will answer."

Poddington (for later the white captive did prove to be the missing circus man) ran on, and close behind him came two of the giants, taking long strides. Tom aimed his electric rifle at the foremost and pulled the trigger. There was no sound, but the big man crumpled up and fell, rolling over and over. With a yell of rage his companion pressed on, but a moment later, he, too, went down, and then the others, who had started in pursuit of their recent captive, turned back.

"I thought that would fix 'em," murmured Tom gleefully.

In another five seconds Poddington was inside the hut, gasping from his run. He was very thin and pale, and the sudden exertion had been too much for him.

"Water—water!" he gasped, and Mr. Damon gave him some. He sank on one of the skin-covered benches, and his half-exhausted breath slowly came back to him.

"Boys," he gasped, "I don't know who you are, but thank heaven you came just in time. I couldn't have stood it much longer. I heard you yell something about Preston. Is it possible he sent you to find me?"

"Partly that and partly to get a giant," ex-

plained Tom. "We didn't know you were in that hut, or we'd never have blown up the one next to it, though we suspected you might be held captive somewhere around here, from the queer way the giants acted when we asked about you."

"And so you blew up that hut?" remarked the circus agent. "I thought it was struck by lightning. But it did me a good turn. I was chained to the wall of the hut next door, and your explosion split the beam to which my chains were fastened. I didn't lose any time running out, I can tell you. Oh, but it's good to be free once more and to see someone my own size!"

"How did you get here, and why did they keep you a prisoner?" asked Tom. Then Poddington told his story, while Ned and Mr. Damon aided Tom in filing off the rude iron shackles from his wrists and ankles.

As Mr. Preston had heard, Jake Poddington had started for giant land. But he lost his way, his escort of natives deserted him, just as Tom's did, and he wandered on in the jungle, nearly dying. Then, merely by accident, he came upon giant land, but he had the misfortune to incur the anger of the big men who took him for an enemy. They at once made him a prisoner, and had kept him so ever since, though they did not harm him otherwise, and gave him good food.

"I think they were a bit afraid of me in spite of my small size," explained the circus man. "I never thought to be rescued, for, though I figured that Mr. Preston might hear of my plight, he could never find this place. How did you get here?"

Then Tom told his story, and of how they themselves were held captives because of the treachery of Hank Delby.

"That's just like him!" cried Poddington. "He was always mean, and always trying to get the advantage of his rivals. But I'm glad I'm with you. With what stuff you have here it oughtn't to be difficult to get away from giant land."

"But I want a giant," insisted Tom. "I told Mr. Preston I'd bring him back one, and I'm going to do it."

"You can't!" cried the circus man. "They won't come with you, and it's almost impossible to make a prisoner of one. You'd better escape. I want to get away from giant land. I've had enough."

"We'll get away," said Tom confidently, "and we'll have a giant or two when we go."

"You'll have some before you go I guess!" suddenly interrupted Ned. "There's a whole crowd of 'em headed this way, and they've got clubs,

bows and arrows and those blow guns! I guess they're going to besiege us."

"All right!" cried Tom. "If they want to fight we can give 'em as good as they send. Ned, you and Mr. Damon and I will handle the electric rifles. Eradicate, use your shotgun, and fire high. We don't want to hurt any of the big men. We'll merely stun them with the electric bullets, but the noise of Rad's gun will help some."

"What can I do?" asked Mr. Poddington.

"You're too weak to do much," replied Tom. "You just keep on the lookout, and tell us if they try any surprises. I guess we can handle 'em all right."

With shouts and yells the big men came on. Evidently their indifference toward their captives had turned to anger because of the freeing of Poddington, and now they were determined to use harsh measures. They advanced with wild yells, brandishing their clubs and other weapons, while the weird sound of the tom-toms and natives drums added to the din.

When a short distance from the hut the giants stopped, and began firing arrows and darts from the blow guns.

"Look out for those!" warned Tom. "They probably are poisoned, and a scratch may mean death. Give 'em a few shots now, Ned and Mr.

Damon! Rad, give 'em a salute, but fire high!"

"Dat's what I will, Massa Tom!"

The gun of the colored man barked out a noisy welcome, and, at the same time three giants fell, stunned by the electric bullets, for the rifles were adjusted to send out only mild charges.

Thrice they charged, and each time they were driven back, and then, finding that the captives were ever ready for them, they gave up the attempt to overwhelm them, and hurried away, many going into the king's hut. His royal majesty did not show himself during the fight.

"Well, I guess they won't try that right away again," remarked Tom, as he saw the stunned giants slowly arouse themselves and crawl away. "We've taught them a lesson."

They felt better after that, and then, when they had eaten and drank, they began to consider ways and means of escape. But Tom would not hear of going until he could get at least one giant for the circus.

"But you can't!" insisted Mr. Poddington.

"Well, it's too soon to give up yet," declared Tom. "I'd like to take the king's two brothers with me."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Mr. Poddington, "I never thought of that. There is just a bare chance. Did you know that the two brothers, who

are twins, dislike the king, for he is younger than they, and he practically took the throne away from them. They should rule jointly by rights. If we could enlist Tola and Koku on our side we might win out yet."

"Then we'll try!" exclaimed Tom.

Jake Poddington, who had been a captive in the giant city long enough to know something of its history, and had learned to talk the language, explained how Kosk had ursurped the throne. His brothers were subject to him, he said, but several times they had tried in vain to start a revolution. To punish them for their rebellious efforts the king made them his personal servants, and this explained why he sent them to see the tricks Tom performed.

"If we could only get into communication with the big twins," went on the circus man, "we could offer to take them with us to a country where they would be bigger kings than their brother is here. It's a royal conspiracy worth trying."

"Then we'll try it!" cried Tom enthusiastically.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TWIN GIANTS

DARING indeed was the scheme decided on by the captives, and yet its very boldness might make it possible for them to carry it out. The king would never suspect them of plotting to carry off his two royal brothers, and this made it all the easier to lay their plans. In this they were much helped by Poddington, who knew the language and who had made a few friends among the more humble people of the village, though none dared assist him openly.

"The first thing to do," said the circus man, "is to get into communication with the twins."

That proved harder than they expected, for a week passed, and they did not have a glimpse of Tola and Koku. Meanwhile the giant guard was still maintained about the hut night and day. No more food was given the prisoners, and they would have starved had not Tom possessed a good supply of his own provisions. It was evidently the intention of the king to starve his captives into submission.

"Suppose you do get those big brothers to accompany you, Tom?" asked Ned one day. "How are you going to manage to get away, and take them with you?"

"My aeroplane!" answered Tom quickly. "I've got it all planned out. You and I with Mr. Damon, Mr. Poddington and Eradicate will skip away in the aeroplane. We can put it together in here, and I've got enough gasolene to run it a couple of hundred miles if necessary."

"But the giants—you can't carry them in it."

"No, and I'm not going to try. If they'll agree to go they can set off through the woods afoot. We'll meet them in a certain place—where there's a good land mark which we can easily distinguish from the aeroplane. We'll take what stuff we can with us, and leave the rest here. Oh, it can be done, Ned."

"But when you start out with the aeroplane they'll make a rush and overwhelm us."

"No, for I'll do it so quickly that they won't have a chance. I'm going to saw through the beams of one side of this hut. To the rear there is level ground that will make a fine starting place. When everything is ready, say some night, we'll pull the side wall down, start the aeroplane out as it falls, and sail away. Then we'll pick

up the giant brothers out in the woods, and travel to civilization again."

"By Jove! I believe that will work!" cried the circus man.

"Bless my corn plaster, I think so myself!" added Mr. Damon.

"But first we've got to get the brothers to agree," went on Tom, "and that is going to be hard work."

It was not so difficult as it was tedious. Through an aged woman, with whom he had made friends when a captive, Jake Poddington managed to get word to the royal twins that he and the other captives would like to see them privately. Then they had to wait for an answer.

In the meanwhile the giants tried several times to surprise Tom and his friends by attacks, but the captives were on the alert, and the electric rifles drove them back.

One night nearly all the guards were observed to be absent. There were not more than half a dozen scattered about the hut.

"I wonder what that means?" asked Tom, who was puzzled.

"I know!" exclaimed Jake Poddington after a moment's thought. "It's their big annual feast. Even the king goes to it. They were just getting over it when I struck here last year, and maybe

that's what set them so against me. Boys, this may be our chance!"

"How?" asked Ned.

"The king's brothers may find an opportunity to come and talk to us when the feast is at its height," was the reply.

Anxiously they waited, and in order that the royal brothers might come in unobserved, if they did conclude to speak to the captives, Tom and his companions hung some pieces of canvas over the windows and doors, and had only a single light burning.

It was at midnight that a cautious knock sounded at the side of the hut and Tom glided to the main door. In the shadows he saw the two royal brothers, Tola and Koku.

"Here they are!" whispered Tom to Jake Poddington, who came forward.

"Come!" invited the circus man in the giants' tongue, and the brothers entered the hut.

How Jake persuaded them to throw in their fortunes with the captives the circus man hardly knew himself. Perhaps it was due as much as anything to the dislike they felt toward the king, and the mean way he had treated them.

"Come, and you will be kings among the small men in our country," invited Poddington. The

brothers looked at each other, talked together in low tones, and then Koku exclaimed:

"We will come, and we will help you to escape. We have spoken, and we will talk with you again."

Then they glided out into the darkness, while from afar came the sounds of revelry at the big feast.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SURPRISE IN THE NIGHT

Tom and his friends could scarcely believe their good fortune. It seemed incredible that they should have induced two of the biggest giants to accompany them back, and, not only that, but that they had the promise of the strong men to aid them.

"Now we must get busy," declared Tom, when their visitors had gone. "We've got lots of work to do on the aeroplane, and we must try out the engine. Then we've got to fix the side of the hut so it will fall out when we're ready for it. And we've got to plan how to meet the giants later in the forest."

"Yes," agreed the circus man, "and we must take care that Hank Delby doesn't spoil our plans."

Then ensued busy days. In the seclusion of their hut the prisoners could work undisturbed at the aeroplane, which had been almost assembled.

The engine was installed and tried, and, when the motor began its thundering explosions, there

was consternation among the giants, who had again surrounded the hut to see that the prisoners did not escape.

Meanwhile Delby seemed to be unusually active. He could be observed going in and out from his hut to that of the king, and he often carried large bundles.

"He's making himself solid with his royal highness," declared Tom. "Well, if all goes right, we won't have to worry much longer about what he does."

"If only those twin giants don't fail us," put in Ned.

"Oh, you can depend on them," said Mr. Poddington. "These giants are curious creatures, but once they give their word they stick to it." He told much about the strange big men, confirming Tom's theory that favorable natural conditions, for a number of generations, had caused ordinary South American natives to develope into such large specimens.

Our friends were under quite a nervous tension, for they could not be sure of what would happen from day to day. They continued to work on the aeroplane, and then, finding that it would work in the seclusion of the hut, they were anxious for the time to come when they could try it in the open.

"Do you think it will carry the five of us with safety?" asked the circus man, as he gazed rather dubiously at the somewhat frail-appearing affair.

"Sure!" exclaimed Tom. "We'll get away all right if I can get enough of a start. Now we must see to opening the side of the hut."

This work had to be done cautiously, yet the prisoners had a certain freedom, for the guards were afraid to approach too closely.

The supporting and cross beams were sawed through, for Tom had brought a number of carpenter tools along with him. Then, in the silence of the night, the two royal brothers brought other beams that could be put in place temporarily to hold up the roof when the others were pulled out to allow the aeroplane to rush forth.

In due time all was in readiness for the attempt to escape. The royal twins had agreed to slip off at a certain signal, and await Tom and his party in the forest at the foot of a very large hill, that was a landmark for miles around. The giants could travel fast, but not as fast as the aeroplane, so it was planned that they were to have a day and night's start. They would take along food, and would arrange to have a number of Tom's mules hidden in the woods, so that our hero and his friends would have means of trans-

portation back to the coast, after they had ended their flight in the airship.

"I wish we had brought along the larger one, so we could take the giants with us," said Tom, "but I guess they're strong enough to walk to the coast. We'll take what provisions we can carry, our electric rifles, and the rest of the things we'll leave here for the king, though he doesn't deserve them."

"What do you think Delby will do?" asked Ned.

"Give it up. He's got some plan though. I only hope he doesn't get a giant. Then ours will be a greater attraction."

Several days passed, and the last of the preparations had been made.

"The giant twins will pretend to go off on a hunting trip to-morrow morning," said the circus man one night, "but they won't come back. They'll wait for us at the big hill."

"Then we must escape the following morning," decided Tom. "Well, I'm ready for it."

From their hut, surrounded as it was still by the giant guards, our friends watched the royal brothers start off, seemingly on a hunting expedition.

The day passed slowly. Tom went carefully over the aeroplane, to see that it was in shape for

a quick flight, and he looked to the wall of the hut—the wall that was to be pulled from place to afford egress for the air craft.

They went to bed early that night—the night they hoped would be their last in giant land. It must have been about midnight when Tom suddenly awoke. He thought he heard a noise outside the hut and in a moment he had jumped up.

"Repel boarders!" cried Tom.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE AIRSHIP FLIGHT

For a few moments there was confusion inside the hut that was to be the last stronghold of our friends against the approaching force of giants. Confusion and not a little fear were mingled, for Tom's words sent a chill to every heart. Then, after the first panic, there came a calmer feeling —a feeling that each one would do his duty in the face of danger and, if he had to die, he would die fighting.

"Everyone take a window!" yelled Tom. "Don't kill any one if you can help it. Shoot to disable, Rad. Mr. Poddington, there's an extra shotgun somewhere about! See if you can find it. We'll use the electric rifles. Get those Roman candles somebody!"

Tom was like a general giving orders, and once his friends realized that he was managing things they felt more confidence. Ned grasped his electric rifle, as did Mr. Damon, and they stood ready to use them.

"The strongest stunning charge!" ordered the

young inventor. "Something that will lay 'em out for a good while. We'll teach 'em a lesson!"

Bang!

That was Eradicate's shotgun going off. It had a double load in it, and the wonder of it was that the barrel did not burst. It sounded like a small cannon, but it had the good effect of checking the first rush of giants, for the electric rifles had not yet been adjusted, and Mr. Poddington, in the light of the single electric torch that had been left burning, could find neither the spare shotgun nor the Roman candles.

Bang!

Eradicate let the other barrel go, almost in the faces of the advancing giants, but over their heads, for he bore in mind Tom's words not to injure.

"That's the stuff!" cried Tom. "Come on now, Ned, we're ready for 'em!"

But the giants had retreated, and could be seen standing in groups about the hut, evidently planning what to do next. Then from back in the village there shone a glare of light.

"Bless my insurance policy! It's a fire!" cried Mr. Damon. "They're going to burn us out!"

"Jove! If they do!" exclaimed Ned.

"We mustn't let 'em!" shouted Tom. "Fire, Ned!"

Together the chums discharged their electric rifles at the enemy and a number of them fell, stunned, and were carried away by their companions.

The glaring light approached and now it could be seen that it was caused by a number of the big men carrying torches of some kind of blazing wood. It did look as though they intended to fire the prison hut.

"Give 'em another taste of it!" shouted Ned, and this time the three electric rifles shot out their streaks of blue flame, for Mr. Damon had his in action. It was still dark in the hut, for to set aglow more of the electric torches meant that Tom and his friends would be exposed to view, and would be the targets for the arrows, or darts from the deadly blow guns.

Several more of the giants toppled over, and then began a retreat to some distance, the first squad of fighters going to meet the men who had come up with the torches. There was no sign of women or children.

"Shall we fire again?" asked Ned.

"No," answered Tom. "Save your ammunition until they are closer, and we'll be surer of our marks. Besides, if they let us alone that's all we ask. We don't want to hurt 'em,

"Bless my gizzard!" exclaimed Mr. Damon. "I wonder why they attacked us, anyhow?"

"Maybe it's about the two giant brothers who have not come back," suggested Mr. Poddington. "They may imagine that we have them captive, and they want to rescue them."

"That's so," admitted Tom. "Well, if they had only postponed this reception for a few hours we'd have been out of their way, and they wouldn't have had this trouble," and he glanced at the aeroplane, that stood in the big hut, ready for instant flight.

"They're coming back!" suddenly shouted Ned, and a look from the half-opened windows showed the giants again advancing.

"I've got the Roman candles!" called Mr. Poddington from a corner where he had been rummaging in that box of Tom's which contained so many surprises. "What shall I do with 'em?"

"Let 'em go right in their faces!" yelled Tom. "They won't do much damage, but they'll throw a scare into the big fellows! Get ready, Ned!"

"They're dividing!" shouted his chum. "They're coming at us from two sides!"

"They're only trying to confuse us," decided Tom. "Fire at the main body!" And with that he opened up with his electric rifle, an example followed by Mr. Damon and Ned.

With a whizz, and several sharp explosions, the circus man got the Roman candles into action. The glaring fire of them lighted up the scene better than did the flaming torches of the giants, and truly it was a wonderful sight. There, in that lonely hut, in the midst of a South American jungle, four intrepid white persons, and an aged but brave negro, stood against hundreds of giants —mighty men, who, had they come to a personal contact, any one of which would have been more than a match for the combined strength of Tom and his party. It was a weird picture that the young inventor looked out upon, but his heart did not quail.

Gaint after giant went down under the fierce rain of the electric bullets, stunned, but not otherwise injured. There was a shower of sparks, and a hail of burning balls from the Roman candles, but still the advance was kept up. Eradicate was banging away with his shotgun.

"Dis suah am hot work!" cried the colored man, as his hand came in contact with the barrel. "Wow! It's most *red* hot!" he added with a cry of pain.

"Use the other gun," advised Tom, never turning his head from the window through which he was aiming. "That one may get choked, and explode in here."

"All right," answered Eradicate.

"Duck!" yelled Ned with sudden energy. "They're going to fire!" A number of the giants could be seen fitting arrows to bow strings, while others raised to their lips the long hollow reeds, from which the blow guns were made. It was the first time the enemy had fired and doubtless they had held back because they hoped to capture Tom and his friends alive. But they did not count on such a stubborn resistance.

Every one moved away from the windows, and not an instant too soon, for, a moment later, a shower of arrows and darts came in, fortunately injuring no one.

Then, above the shouting and yelling of the giants, whose deep, bass voices had a terrorizing effect, there came the din of the tom-toms, making a weird combination of sound.

"We've got 'em on the run again!" cried Ned, and so it proved, for the larger body of giants, who had approached the hut from the front and two sides, were running back.

"Guess they've given it up," exclaimed Tom. "I'm glad of it, too, for——"

He paused and glanced behind him. A tiny spurt of flame at the base of the rear wall of the hut had caught his eye. Instantly the flame grew larger, and a puff of smoke followed.

"Fire!" cried Ned. "We're on fire!"

"Bless my water bucket!" gasped Mr. Damon. "They've set fire to the hut!"

It was but too true. While Tom and the others had been standing off the giants in front, a smaller force had crept around to the rear, and set the inflamable side of the hut ablaze.

Desperately Tom looked around. There was no means at hand of fighting fire. Hardly a bucket of water was in the place, and the structure was filled with quick-burning stuff, while the fireworks that remained, and the blasting powder, made it doubly dangerous. Then Tom's eyes lighted on the big aeroplane, ready for instant service.

"That's it!" he cried suddenly. "It's our only hope, and the last one! Come on, everybody! Down with that wall! Pull on the ropes and it will come! We've got to go now. In another minute it will be too late. Climb up, Mr. Poddington, Mr. Damon, Ned, and I will start the machine."

"The wall first! The wall!" cried Ned.

"Sure," answered Tom. He and his friends grasped the two ropes that had been attached to the key-beams in the structure. It had been so arranged that when the supports were pulled out the wall would fall outward, making a fairly

smooth and level gangplank, on which the aeroplane could rush from the hut.

There was a creaking of timbers, a straining of ropes, and then, with a crash, the wall fell. Instantly there was a yell of surprise from the giants, and a brighter glare from the torches, as those carrying them rushed up to see what had happened. The din of the tom-toms was well-nigh deafening. Fortunately the enemy forgot to take advantage of the opening and pour in a flight of arrows or darts.

"Start the motor!" cried Tom to his chum.

There was a rattling, banging noise, like a slavo of small arms, and the big propellers revolved with incredible swiftness. The two white men were already in place, and now Eradicate, still carrying his shotgun, clambered up.

"Up with you. Ned!" yelled Tom. "I'm going to head her around and make a flying start."

CHAPTER XXV

TOM'S GIANT—CONCLUSION

"I DON'T see anything of them, do you?"

"No, and yet this is the place where they said they'd meet us."

It was Tom who asked the question, and Ned who answered it. It was the day after their sensational escape from the giants' prison, and they were circling about in the aeroplane which had been the means of getting them away from giant land. For they were safely away from that strange and terrible place, and they were now seeking the two giant brothers who had promised to meet them at a certain big hill.

For an hour that night Tom and his friends had traveled on the wings of the *Lark* and when a rising moon showed them a level spot for a landing, they had gone down and made a camp. They had provisions with them, and plenty of blankets, and it was so warm that more shelter was not necessary.

The next day, leaving Mr. Damon, Eradicate and the circus man in the temporary camp, Tom

and Ned had gone aloft to see if they could pick up the giant twins, who were to meet them and have some mules ready for the journey back to civilization.

"Well, we're in no great hurry," went on Tom, after vainly scanning the ground below. "They may not have traveled as fast as we thought they could, and the mules may have given trouble. We'll stick around here a day or so, and——"

"Look!" suddenly exclaimed Ned. "Didn't you see something moving then."

"Where?"

"By that big dead tree."

Tom took a look through a pair of field glasses, while Ned steered the aeroplane. Then the young inventor cried:

"It's all right. It's one of the giants, but I can't tell which one. Ned, I believe they're hiding because they're afraid of us. They've never seen an aeroplane in action before. I'm going down."

Quickly and gracefully the *Lark* was volplaned to a level place near the dead tree. No one was in sight, and Tom, after looking about, called:

"Tola! Koku! Where are you? It is I, Tom Swift! We have escaped! Where are you? Don't be afraid!"

There was a moment's silence, and then two big forms rushed from the dense bushes, one of

them—Koku—advancing to Tom, and catching him up in what was meant for a loving hug.

"Oh, I say now, Koku!" cried the young inventor, with a laugh. "I've got ribs, you know. Easy on that squeeze!"

The two giant twins laughed too, and they were immensely pleased to see their friends again, both talking at once and so fast that not even the circus man could catch what they said.

"Have you got the mules?" asked Tom, for he knew that much depended on the animals. "Is everything all right?"

"All right," answered Koku, the talk being conducted in the language of the giants of which Tom was now fairly a master when it was spoken slowly. Then the brothers explained that they had gotten safely away, had gathered up the mules, and with a supply of food, had hidden the beasts in a nearby valley. The giant twins were waiting for Tom to arrive, but, though they had seen the areoplanes in the hut they had no idea that it could fly so nearly like a bird, and when they saw it hovering over them they had become frightened, and hidden, until Tom's voice had reassured them.

"Well, get the animals," advised Tom, after he had told of the fight of the night before, and the escape. "I'll go find the others and we'll

start from here. Then we'll hike for the United States as fast as we can."

Mr. Damon, Eradicate and the circus man were soon brought to the place where the giant brothers had made their camp, and it was decided to remain there a few days until the aeroplane could be taken apart for transportation, for Tom had no idea of abandoning it. Of course it could not be packed up very well, as there were no boxes or bales at hand. But it was made small enough so that the parts could be slung across the backs of several mules, there being a number of the pack animals available, some being the same ones Tom had purchased after his native escort had deserted him.

It was the morning they had decided to begin their march for the coast. Everything was in readiness, they had some food, and with the shotguns and the electric rifles which they had brought along, they could get game. All their other things, save a few necessaries, had been left behind. Eradicate, as he had always done, rode his mule up beside Tom, to look after his young master.

Suddenly Koku, who seemed to have become very fond of Tom, strode forward and took his place on the other side of the mule ridden by the young inventor.

"Me stay by you," he said with a grin on his

big face. "Me like you! Me take care of you, Tom—be your servant. Him too old," and he motioned to Eradicate.

"Eh! What's dat yo' done said?" gasped the colored man. "Me too old? Looky heah, giant man, I'd hab yo' know dat I's been in de Swift fambly a good many years, an' I's jest as spry as I eber was. I kin look after Massa Tom as good as eber. Now yo' git back where yo' belongs, giant man, an' doan't let me heah no mo' ob dat foolishness talk. Nobody waits on Massa Tom Swift but me. Does yo' heah dat, giant man?"

"Me Tom's man!" exclaimed the big fellow, and in fairly good English. Tom laughed. He had no idea the giant had picked up any words.

"Go on away!" cried Eradicate.

Koku gave the colored man one look, then, with a good natured grin on his face, he reached over one hand, calmly lifted Eradicate from his mule and set him on the ground. Then, with a push, he shoved the mule galloping ahead, and took his place at the side of the young inventor.

"Well, what do you know about that?" gasped Ned.

"Bless my coffee cup!" cried Mr. Damon.

Eradicate stood still for a moment, gazing first at his master and then at the big being who had

so ruthlessly plucked him from the mule's back, as easily as he would have lifted a child. Then Eradicate, with a trace of tears in his eyes, stretched forth his hands toward Tom, and turned aside. That was too much for our hero.

With one leap he was off his animal, and the next minute he had his arms around the faithful old colored man.

"By Jove, Rad!" cried Tom, and his own eyes were not dry. "I'm not going to be deserted by you in that way. You're just the same as ever to me, giant or no giant, and don't you forget it!" and he patted the old man on the back affectionately.

"Praise de Lord fo' heahin' yo' say dat, Massa Tom," gasped Eradicate. "Praise de dear Lord!"

And then, knowing that he still held a place in his young master's heart, the colored man was content. And from then on he rode on one side of Tom, while the giant, Koku, strode along on the other. He had established himself as Tom's bodyguard and even though Eradicate insisted on remaining, Koku would not go away.

"I guess I'll have to keep 'em both," said Tom, with a grin, "but I'm going to change Koku's name."

"What are you going to call him?" asked Ned.

"Let's see, what month is this?"

"August," said Mr. Damon.

"Then August is his name!" exclaimed Tom. "Koku sounds too much like a cocoanut cake. Here, August, shift that package on the white mule," he called, "it's cutting her back," and the giant with a pleased grin, did as he was bid. And August he was called from then on.

But my story is getting too long, so I must bring it to a close. And really there is not much to tell. The march back to the coast was full of hardships, danger and difficulties, but they accomplished it. The two giants seemed glad that they had left their own country behind and they were simple and affectionate beings. Tom made up his mind he would let the circus man have one and keep the other for his personal attendant.

They traveled by day, and slept at night, shooting game as they needed it. Several times they narrowly escaped getting mixed up in the native conflicts. Tom had one striking evidence of his giant servant's usefulness. One day he was stalking a small beast, like a deer, when, from a tree overhead, a jaguar sprang down at him. But Koku—I beg his pardon—August was at hand, and, like Sampson of old, the giant slew the beast bare-handed, choking it to death.

In due time our friends reached a native town and the wonder caused by the giants was no less

than the amusement of the big men at the things they saw. They wondered more when they got to a city, and saw more marvels of the white man's progress.

Then Tom and his friends reached the coast, and took a steamer for New York. The giants created a great sensation, the more when it was known that Tom intended to keep one for himself. With this arrangement Mr. Preston agreed, for he only wanted one as an attraction.

"Couldn't have done it better myself!" the circus proprietor said to Tom when he heard the story, and this was high praise from Mr. Preston.

"And you rescued old Jake, too! Well, well! Couldn't have done it better myself! I really coudn't!"

"I wonder how our old enemy Delby made out?" asked Mr. Poddington. They heard later that he was driven from giant land, not even being allowed to take a boy as a specimen. He had worked on the "tip" Andy Foger had given Mr. Waydell, but it failed. When Tom escaped, the king confiscated all the things in the hut, and he was so taken up with the novelties that he paid no more attention to the circus agent, who had all his trouble, plotting and scheming against Tom for his pains.

"A giant in the house!" cried Mrs. Baggert,

when Tom got home with August. "I never heard of such a thing in all my life! Where will he sleep? Not a bed is big enough!"

"We'll give him two beds then," laughed Tom.

And so they did, and August was immensely pleased with his new life. He proved to be very useful, and readily adapted himself to civilized ways.

Tola, the other giant, made a big sensation when exhibited, and Mr. Preston said he was well worth the fifteen thousand dollars he had cost.

"Well, Tom, what next?" asked Ned one day, when they had been home several weeks and had told their story over and over again.

"No where!" exclaimed Tom. "I'm going to take a long rest."

But Tom Swift wasn't that kind of a young man, and he was soon active again. If you care to learn more of his doings you may do so in the next volume of this series, to be called, "Tom Swift and His Electric Camera; Or Thrilling Adventures While Taking Moving Pictures."

And now, for a time, we will take leave of the young inventor and his new giant servant, to meet them again a little later.

THE END

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